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OR
THE MASSACRE OF CHICAGO.



BY MAJOR RICHARDSON.

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WAU-NAN-GEE;

OR,

THE MASSACRE AT CHICAGO.

A ROMANCE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

BY MAJOR RICHARDSON,

AUTHOR OF "WACOUSTA," "HARDSCRABBLE," "ECARTE," "JACK BRAG IN SPAIN,"
"TECUMSEH," &c.

NEW YORK:
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PREFATORY INSCRIPTION.

My Publishers ask of me a couple of pages of matter to precede this Tale. It is scarcely necessary to state, that the whole of the text approaches so nearly to Historical fact, that any other preface than that which admits the introduction of but one strictly fictitious character—Maria Heywood—in the book, must be, in a great degree, supererogatory. Yet I gladly avail myself of this pleasing opportunity of manifesting the deep interest and sympathy with which I have ever regarded those brave spirits—heroes not less than heroines—who participated in the trials of that brief but horrid epoch. How can I better exemplify this than by inscribing to the descendants of the venerable founder of the City of Chicago—prominent actor in the scene—as well as to the gallant military survivors of the Massacre, if any yet exist, the fruits of that interest and that sympathy.

Dedications and Inscriptions have almost grown out of fashion—at least they are not so general in the present century as in the days of Dryden; but where, through them, an opportunity for the expression of esteem and sympathy is presented, an Author may gladly avail himself of the occasion to show that no common interest influenced the tracings of his pen—not the mere desire to make a book, but to establish on a high pedestal, and to circulate through the most attractive and popular medium, the merits of those

whose deeds and sufferings have inspired him with the generous spirit of eulogistic comment.

To Her Majesty's 41st Regiment, in garrison at Detroit shortly after the occurrences herein detailed, my first Indian Tale, "WACOUSTA," was inscribed, and this in memory of the long, and by no means feather-bed service I had seen with that gallant Corps, in the then Western wilds of America; it was a tribute of the soldier to his companions in arms. In the same spirit I inscribe "WAU-NAN-GEE" to those who were then our enemies, but whose courage and whose sufferings were well known to all, and claimed our deep sympathy, our respect, and our admiration,—none more than the noble Mrs. Heald, and Mrs. Helme, the former the wife of the Commanding Officer, the latter the daughter of the patriarch of Illinois, Mr. Kenzie, some years since gathered to his forefathers.

THE AUTHOR.

NEW YORK, *March 30th, 1852.*

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THE MASSACRE AT CHICAGO.

CHAPTER I.

"He has come to open the purple testament of war."—*Richard II*

It was the 7th of August, 1812, when Winnebeg, the confidential Indian messenger of Captain Headley, commanding Fort Dearborn, suddenly made his appearance within the stockade. With a countenance on which was depicted more of the seriousness and concern than usually attach to his race, he requested the officer of the guard, Lieutenant Elmsley, to allow him to pass to the apartment of the Chief. The subaltern shook him cordially by the hand as an old and familiar acquaintance; and, half laughingly taunting him with the great solemnity of his aspect, asked him where he had been so long, and what news he brought.

"Berry bad news," replied the Indian gravely; "must see him Gubberner directly—dis give him;" and thrusting his hand into the bosom of his deerskin shirt, he drew forth a large sealed packet, evidently an official despatch.

"From Detroit, Winnebeg?"

"Yes; come in two days—great news—bad news!"

"Indeed? You shall see the commanding officer directly."

"Corporal Collins, conduct Winnebeg to Captain Headley's quarters."

The non-commissioned officer hastened to acquit himself of the duty, and, on the announcement of his name, the chief was admitted to the presence of the commandant.

The latter saw at a glance, from the countenance of the Indian, that there was something wrong. He shook him warmly by the hand, bade him be seated, and then hastily breaking the seal of the despatch, with an air of pre-occupation perused its contents.

The document was from General Hull, and ran nearly as follows:—

"From the difficulty of access to your post, cut off as is the communication by the numerous bands of hostile Indians whom Tecumseh has raised up in arms against us, I take it for granted that you are yet ignorant that war has

been declared between Great Britain and the United States. Such, however, is the fact, and in a few days I expect myself to be surrounded by a horde of savages, when my position will indeed be a trying one, not as regards myself, but the hundreds of defenceless women and children, whom nothing can preserve from the tomahawk and the scalping knife. I, moreover, fear much for Colonel Cass, who, with a body of five hundred men, is at a short distance from this, and will be cut to pieces the moment an attack is made upon myself. To add to the untowardness of events, I have just received intelligence that the Fort of Mackinaw has been taken by the British and their allies, so that, almost simultaneously with the receipt of this, you in all probability will hear of their advance upon yourself. The result must not be tested, and forthwith you will, *if it be yet practicable*, evacuate your post and retire upon Fort Wayne, after having first distributed all the public property contained in the fort and factory among the friendly Indians around you. This is most important, for it is necessary that these people should be conciliated, not only with a view to the safe escort of your detachment to Fort Wayne, but in order to their subsequent assistance here. There are, I believe, nearly five hundred Pottowatomies encamped around you, and such a numerous body of Indians would, if left free to act against Tecumseh's warriors, materially lessen the difficulty of my position here. Treat them as if you had the utmost reliance on their fidelity, for any appearance of distrust might only increase the evil we wish to avoid. I rely upon your judgment and discretion, which Colonel Miller assures me are great. I have preferred writing this confidential dispatch with my own hand, in order that, by keeping your exposed condition as secret as possible, no unnecessary alarm may be excited in the inhabitants of this town by a knowledge of the danger that threatens their friends."

All this was indeed news, and most painful and perplexing news, to Captain Headley. He read the dispatch twice, and when he had completed the second perusal, he raised his eyes to the chief, who was regarding him at the moment fixedly as with a view to read his intentions, and asked if General Hull had at all communicated to him the contents of the dispatch.

"Yes, Gubberner," replied the Indian. "Tell him Winnebago take soger—den come back to Detroit—what say him, Gubberner—go to Fort Wayne?" and he looked earnestly at the commanding officer while he waited his answer.

"I do not know, Winnebago; I have not made up my mind. We must consider what is best to be done."

All this was evasive. The order was conclusive with Captain Headley. Had his road led over a battery bristling with cannon, once ordered, he would have made the attempt; but, from a motive of prudence, the cause for which he could not explain to himself, he was unwilling to communicate his final determination to the chief.

"Leave me now, Winnebago; I have much to do that must be done directly; come early to-morrow, and we will talk the matter over. Meanwhile, not a word to your young men of the beginning of the war, or the fall of Mackinaw. Do you promise me? To-morrow I will hold a council."

"Yes, Winnebago promise," he said, taking the proffered hand of Captain Headley; "not speak till to-morrow? How him fine squaw, eh?"

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"Mrs. Headley is quite well, Winnebeg," returned the Captain, faintly smiling, "and I am sure she will be very glad to hear that you have returned. Come and breakfast with us at eight o'clock, and she will tell you so herself; so, for the present, good bye."

Winnebeg departed, but, far from satisfied with the answer he had received, he repeated the question to the commanding officer—"Go to Fort Wayne?"

"Maybe--perhaps—I will tell you to-morrow in council," returned Captain Headley. "What do you think, Winnebeg?"

The chief looked at him steadily for some moments, shook his head in disapproval of the scheme, and then slowly and silently withdrew.

"What can this mean?" mused Captain Headley, when left alone. "Whence his opposition to the will of the General? Surely he cannot meditate treachery. He does not wish to see us taken by the British here. But—nonsense! I will at once summon my officers, make a council of the state of affairs, and for form's sake, consult with them as to our mode of proceeding—my own determination of retreat is not the less formed. Corporal Collins!" he called to the orderly, who was pacing up and down in front of the door opening on the parade ground, "summon the several officers to attend me here within the hour."

"Please your honor, sir," said the man, hesitatingly, as he raised his hand to his cap.

"Well, sir, please what?"

"There is only Mr. Elmaley in the fort. He is the officer of the guard."

"And where is Mr. Ronayne?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Ronayne and the Doctor rode out soon after dinner, sir, in the direction of Hardscrabble."

"The direction of the devil," muttered the commanding officer. "This is the result of my loosening the reins of discipline; besides, there is some risk. Hostile Indians may be in the neighborhood; and what should I do without officers, pressed as we are now? Let me know, orderly, when they return. The next time they leave the fort, it will be for ever."

"Sir!" said the Corporal, hearing the words, but not comprehending their meaning.

"When next they leave the fort, they will never enter it again," rejoined Captain Headley, abstractedly. "Meanwhile, as soon as Mr. Ronayne and the Doctor return, let them know that I wish to see them, with Mr. Elmaley, immediately."

"Certainly, sir," said Corporal Collins, again touching his cap; "but hang me," he muttered as he departed, "if I don't report to Mr. Ronayne all that he has said. Never enter the fort again! Well, here's a bobbery!" and thus soliloquizing, he resumed his accustomed walk.

It was with deep concern at his heart that Captain Headley, on returning to the apartment of his wife, communicated to her the substance of General Hull's dispatch. A feeling of misgiving arose to her mind from the first, and she saw in the early future scenes and sufferings from which, only an hour before, all had believed themselves to be utterly exempt. For some moments they continued silently gazing on each other, as if to read the thoughts that were passing through the minds of each, when, taking the

hand of the noble woman in his own, he pressed it affectionately as he remarked—

"Ellen, you have ever been my friend and counsellor, as well as the adored wife with which heaven has blessed me, even beyond all I could have desired on earth. Tell me candidly your opinion. What course ought I to pursue on this occasion? One passage in the dispatch leaves it, in some degree, optional to regulate my actions by circumstances. 'If it be yet practicable,' writes the General. Now, I confess my mind is pretty well made up on the subject, but, nevertheless, I should like to have your opinion to sustain me. Thus armed, I can enter upon my plans with the greater confidence of success."

"But, dear Headley, tell me what is your opinion, then I will frankly state my own."

"To retreat, as ordered. I have not the excuse to offer if I would, that the order of the General is impracticable; besides, to remain here longer would only be to insure our subsequent fall. Even if the captors of Mackinaw should fail to carry our weak post, some other force will be sent to succeed them."

Mrs. Headley shook her head, while a faint but melancholy smile passed over her fine features.

"I grieve to differ with you, Headley," she at length said; "but I like not the idea of this abandonment of the fort, to enter on a retreat fraught with every danger to us all. Here, well provisioned and armed, weak though be your force, you can but fall into the hands of a generous foe. Better that than perish by the tomahawk in the wilderness."

"How mean you, my dear?" returned her husband, slightly annoyed that she differed from him in the decision at which he had already arrived. "What chance of harm is there so great in marching through the woods as in remaining here? Have we not five hundred Pottowatomie warriors to escort us to Fort Wayne?"

"Alas, my too confiding husband, it is from these very people you have named that most I fear the danger."

"Nonsense!" returned Captain Headley in a tone of gentle rebuke, while he pressed his lips to the expansive brow of his companion; "this is unkind, Ellen. Why distrust these our staunchest friends? I would rely upon Winnebago as upon myself. He is too noble a fellow not to hold treachery in abhorrence."

"Nay, nay," continued Mrs. Headley; "think not for a moment that I doubt Winnebago; but there is another in the camp of the Pottowatomies who has scarcely less influence with the tribe, and who may take advantage of the present crisis of affairs, and turn them to his own purpose."

"Who do you mean, Ellen, and what purpose? Really, it is important that I should know. What purpose, what motive, can he have?" eagerly questioned Captain Headley.

"The purpose and motive those which often make the gentle tigers, the timid daring, the irresolute confirmed of will—Love."

"Love! what love? whose love? and what has that to do with the fidelity of the Pottowatomies?"

"The love of Wau-nan-gee, the once gentle and modest son of Winnebago, who, scarce three months since, could not gaze into a white woman's eyes

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"And what now?" questioned Captain Headley, seriously.

"My love," resumed Mrs. Headley, placing her hand emphatically on his shoulder, "you know I have never concealed from you anything that regarded myself. I have had no secrets from you; but this is one which affects another. Except for the present aspect of affairs, when you should be duly informed of that which bears reference to our immediate position, I should have felt myself bound by every tie of delicacy and honor, not less than of inclination, to have kept confined to my own bosom that which I am now to reveal in the fullest confidence, on the sole understanding that the slightest allusion shall never be made by you hereafter to the subject."

"This becomes mysterious," rejoined the commandant, smiling; "but Ellen, pleasantry apart, I promise you most truly—and, shall I add, on the honor of an officer and a gentleman, that your disclosure shall be sacred."

"Good! now that I have quieted my own mind, by exacting from you what in fact was not absolutely necessary, I will explain as briefly as I can. Do you recollect the evening of Maria Heywood's marriage with Ronayne?"

"Yes."

"And you remarked the agitation evinced by Wau-nan-gee, during the ceremony, and particularly at the close, when Ronayne, as customary, kissed his bride?"

"I noticed that there was some confusion caused by his abrupt departure, but I neither knew nor inquired the cause, I was too interested in the performance of the ceremony to think of anything but the happiness that awaited them, and which they appeared so much to desire themselves."

"Well, no matter; but you must know that all the agitation of the youth was caused by his jealousy of the good fortune of Ronayne."

"Jealous of Ronayne?" exclaimed Captain Headley with unfeigned surprise. "Ha! ha! ha! excuse me, my dear Ellen, but I cannot avoid being amused at the strangeness of the conceit."

"It was even so," returned Mrs. Headley, gravely, "and a source of unhappiness I fear it will prove to us all that it was so."

"Proceed," said her husband.

"Are you aware that the son of Winnebago has never entered the fort nor been even in the neighborhood since the night of that marriage?" pursued his wife.

"I do not believe he has been seen since," remarked Captain Headley.

"I *know* that he has not; but yet he is ever near, seemingly bent on one purpose."

"Love?" interposed the Captain, smiling.

"Yes, love! but a fearful love—though the love of a smooth-faced boy—a love that may bring down destruction upon us all."

"Ellen, you begin to fill me with alarm," remarked her husband, gravely.

"You are not a woman to be startled by trifles, and there is that in your manner just now which fully satisfies me of the importance of what you have to communicate."

CHAPTER II.

"You know my love for Mrs. Ronayne," continued Mrs. Headley, after a pause of a few minutes. "Even as though she were my own daughter, I regard her, and would do for her all that a fond mother could for her child. Only yesterday afternoon, while Ronayne and the Doctor were out with a party fishing on the old ground above Hardscrabble, she expressed a wish to visit the tomb of her poor mother, who, dying within a week after her marriage, had been buried near the base of the summer-house on the grounds attached to their cottage, and asked me to accompany her. Of course I consented; and as you were busily engaged, you did not particularly notice my absence. We crossed the river in the scow, and ascended leisurely to the garden. It struck me as we walked that the figure of a man, seemingly an Indian, floated rapidly past within the paling of the garden, but I could not distinctly trace the outline, and therefore assumed that I had been deceived, and so said nothing to my companion on the subject.

"We had not been long in the garden when Mrs. Ronayne, leaving me to saunter among and cull from the rich flowers which grew in wild luxuriance around, begged me to wait for her a few minutes while she ascended to the summer-house to commune in private with her thoughts, and indulge the feelings which had been called up, at this her first visit since the place had been abandoned, to the once happy residence of her girlhood. At her entrance, I distinctly heard her give a low shriek, but, taking it for granted that this was in consequence of the effect upon her mind of a sudden recurrence to old and well remembered scenes with which so much of the unpleasant was associated, I paid no great attention to it. After this all was still, and nearly an hour had elapsed when, fancying that it was imprudent to leave her so long to her own melancholy thoughts, I moved towards the summer-house myself, making as much noise with my feet as possible to prepare her for my approach. I had got about half way up the ascent, when to my astonishment I beheld issuing from the entrance not Mrs. Ronayne, but the long-absent Wau-nan-gee, who, with a flushed cheek and a fiery eye, divested of all its former softness, made several bounds in an opposite direction, and, without uttering a word, rapidly disappeared among the fruit trees which bordered on the forest.

"Seized with a strong presentiment of evil, I entered the summer-house. Judge my astonishment when I found it empty. Heaven! what could this mean? I had distinctly seen Mrs. Ronayne enter it, and I had scarcely since taken my eyes off the building. In an agony of despair, I threw myself upon the wooden bench, and scarcely conscious of what I did, called frantically on Maria's name. Suddenly, a sound similar to that of a faint moan seemed to proceed from beneath my feet. I rose, removed the rude Indian mat with which the centre of the floor is covered, and perceived that it had been recently cut into an oblong square nearly the size of the mat itself. The whole truth now flashed upon me—it was evident that my friend was beneath: but the great difficulty was to find the means of removing the door, which fitted so closely that it required some superinducing motive even to suspect its existence. There was nothing inside the building which could effect my purpose. I ran to the door and cast my eyes

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towards the cottage. Around it I saw a number of Indians stealthily moving near one of the wings to the rear. In a moment I saw the necessity for promptitude, and hastened rapidly towards the beach where I had left the crew of the boat, consisting of four men and Corporal Collins, and bade them come as far as the entrance to the garden, where they could distinctly see and be seen from the cottage. I remarked that there were Indians lurking about the grounds, and that neither Mrs. Ronayne nor myself liked being so near them without protection. 'As for you, Corporal Collins,' I added playfully, 'you must lend me your bayonet; an Indian does not like that weapon, and, should any of these people feel inclined to prove unruly, the bare sight of it will be sufficient. Remain here at the gate until I return with Mrs. Ronayne, and keep a good look out that we are not carried off.'

"But, my dear," interposed Captain Headley, anxiously, "why all this mystery about the matter?—all this beating about the bush?—why did you not take Collins and his party to the summer-house and release Mrs. Ronayne, if indeed it was she whose moan you heard?"

"Nay, Headley, in this I but followed your own example. There were many reasons why this should not be. Firstly, for the sake of Maria, whose actual position might be such as to render it injudicious that they be made acquainted with it. Secondly, because it would unavoidably have brought the men in collision with the Indians, which would have entailed ruin upon us all. No; I felt the mere sight of them would awe the Indians around the cottage, whom policy would prevent from open outrage, and that, provided with Collins's bayonet, I could open the trap door and deliver my friend, without any of the party knowing aught of what had occurred."

"Right prudently and sagely did you act, my dear Ellen," returned her husband—"go on: I am all impatience to hear the result."

"On regaining the summer-house, I applied the point of the weapon. With some little exertion the door was raised, and, looking down, I saw something broad and white in the gloom, on which lay a figure indistinctly marked in outline. Gradually, as my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, I remarked two or three rude stones placed as steps, which I placed my feet upon and descended until I had gained the bottom of the aperture and upon the white substance I have just named. It was a large piece of white calico, covering a bed of what appeared to me to be corn-leaves, on which sat or rather reclined Maria. She looked the image of despair—as one stupified—and when I first addressed her, could not speak. Her dress was greatly disordered, her hat off and lying near her, and the comb detached from the long hair.

"Oh, Maria, my child!" I said to her soothingly, 'what a terrible incident is this! Who could have believed Wau-nan-gee would have committed this outrage?'

"The air let in from above tended greatly to revive her, and soon, with my assistance, she was enabled to stand.

"Her voice and manner proclaimed deep agitation. 'Dear, dear Mrs. Headley,' she said impressively, as she threw herself upon my bosom, 'as you love me, not a word to Ronayne or to any other human being. Oh, merciful Providence! it can do no good that aught of this occurrence should be revealed. Promise me then, my more than mother, that what has passed since we entered this garden shall be confined to your own breast.'

"I comprehend and appreciate your motive for this concealment, Maria," I observed, soothingly. "The knowledge of Wau-nan-gee's wrong would arouse the anger of Ronayne in such manner as to give rise to fatal discord between the Indians around and ourselves. Depend upon it, both for the love I bear you, and the necessity for silence, the occurrences of this day never shall be disclosed by me."

"Thanks, thanks," she returned fervently. "To-morrow you shall know all—the deep, the terrible secret that weighs at my heart shall be revealed to you. Yes, give me but until then to prepare myself for the full and entire disclosure of the unhappy truth, and you will not hate me for all that has taken place."

"Maria—Mrs. Ronayne!" I said with some slight severity of manner.

"Oh, you are surprised at my language and sentiments. When the heart is full, the lip measures not its words. Yet, oh, my mother! condemn me not. Hear first what I have to say. Again I repeat, ere your eyes are closed in sleep to-morrow night, you shall know all. The tale will startle you; but now," she added, "I feel that I have strength enough to follow."

"During this short and singular dialogue—singular enough, you must admit, on the part of Mrs. Ronayne—I had assisted her in restoring her dress, which, as I have already said, was very much disordered. On turning to ascend by the stone steps, I remarked with surprise certain articles of food placed on the corner of the calico, which I had been too much occupied with Maria's condition to perceive before. These consisted of a wooden bowl of milk—a brown earthen pitcher of water—a number of flat cakes, seemingly made of corn meal, and a portion of dried venison ham; a wooden spoon was in the bowl, a black tin japanned drinking cup near the water, and a common Indian knife stuck into the venison."

"Bless me, Maria," I said, with an attempt at pleasantry, after we had ascended, and closed the door, "it was well I came to your rescue; Wau-nan-gee certainly meant to have kept you imprisoned here some time, if we may judge from the quantity of food he had provided."

"Such, I believe, was the original intention," gravely replied Mrs. Ronayne.

"She made no other remark, but sighed deeply. We now drew near the gate where Collins and his men were stationed, looking out anxiously for our appearance. I recommended to Maria, in a low tone, not to appear dejected, as the men knew nothing of what had occurred—not even that Wau-nan-gee had been on the grounds—and any appearance of agitation might give rise to suspicion. She followed my suggestion and rallied. I returned Collins his bayonet, stating, with a poor attempt at pleasantry, that we had met with no enemy on whom to try it. He then led the way back, with his party, to the boat."

"The presence of the men acting, in some degree, as a check upon our conversation, Mrs. Ronayne consequently preserved an unbroken silence. She seemed immersed in deep and painful thought, and I could see beneath the thin veil she wore the tears coursing slowly down her cheek. Her first inquiry, on landing, was whether the fishing party was returned, and, on being told that it had not, she seemed to be greatly relieved. I watched her closely, for I need not say that my own daughter could not have inspired me with deeper interest, and in the increased agitation I remarked

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as the hour of her husband's expected return drew nearer, I began to apprehend a fearful result. Not that, even if my suspicions were correct, she could well be blamed, as the mere victim of a violence she could not prevent; but what I did not like to perceive, and which pained me much, was her evident prepossession in favor of the impetuous boy, which induced her to abstain from all indignant censure. These, however, are merely my own crude and perhaps unfounded impressions. That she has some terrible truth to reveal to me, there cannot be a question, nor is it likely that it can affect any but herself. This night, however, I shall know all from her own lips, which, although sealed in prudence to her husband, will not hesitate to confide to me the fullest extent of her painful secret; meanwhile, I should recommend that Wau-nan-gee be watched. His long absence from the fort, while evidently concealed in the neighborhood, looks not well. Evidently, he has been long planning the abduction of Maria, and now that he finds himself foiled by her evasion this day, he will avail himself of the present crisis to leave no means unaccomplished to possess her, no matter what blood may be shed in the attainment of his object."

"Strange, indeed, what you have related," said Captain Headley, gravely, when his wife had ceased. "I confess I scarcely know what to think or how to act. I must hold council with my officers immediately—hear their opinions without divulging aught of what you have related, and act as my own judgment confirms. How unfortunate! Ronayne and his wife, accompanied by Von Voltenberg, have taken it into their heads to ride to Hard-scrabble, and God knows when they will be back. Really, this is most annoying."

At that moment a terrible shriek, as that of a man in his last fearful agony, was heard without. Struck with sudden dismay, both Captain Headley and his wife rushed to the door, which they reached even as Ensign Ronayne, pale, without his hat, his hair blowing in the breeze, and his cheek colorless as death, was in the act of falling from his jaded horse, whose trembling limbs and sides covered with foam, attested the desperate speed with which he had been ridden.

"Oh, God! he has heard all—he knows all," murmured Mrs. Headley, as she fell back in the arms of her husband. "Now, then, is the drama of horror but commenced."

Before the unfortunate officer could be raised and carried to his apartments by the sympathizing soldiers of the garrison, another horseman followed into the fort. It was Doctor Van Voltenberg, whose flushed face and excited appearance denoted the speed at which he too had ridden. He flung himself from his horse, and followed anxiously to the apartment of his friend.

But where was the third of the party? where was Maria, the universally beloved of every soldier of that garrison? where was Mrs. Ronayne?

CHAPTER III.

"A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap, and mouncht."—*Macbeth*

"Thy abundant goodness shall excuse this deadly blot in thy digressing son."
Richard II.

LITTLE more than a month had elapsed since the marriage of the impetuous and generous Ensign Ronayne to the woman he adored. Absorbed by the intensity of their passion, fed by the solitude around, each day increased their attachment, and their full hearts acknowledged that the love which the man bears to his mistress—the affianced sharer of his inmost thoughts—is passionless compared with that which follows the mystic tie, linking their most secret being in fearlessness of devotion. Then, for the first time, had they felt and acknowledged all the power of the beauty of God's holy ordinance, which seemed to wed not in mere form, but in fact, the deepest emotions of their glowing souls. What was the world to them? They hoped to live and die among those wild scenes in which their passion had been cradled and nurtured, until now it had acquired a force almost more than human. Often then, and often even since the short period of their union, had they fallen on their knees in the silence and solitude of the wilderness around, and, clasped to each other's heart, returned fervent thanks to the Deity, not only for having given them hearts to comprehend love in all its mysterious and holy sublimity, but in having blessed them with the dearer self in which each other found pleasure and lived a double existence. More calm, more softened, more subdued in feeling, after this passionate ebullition, a holy and voluptuous calm would beam from their eyes; and when they alluded gently and fondly to the years and years of happiness that yet awaited them in the health and fulness of their youth, thoughts and looks, not words, attested the deep thankfulness of their hearts.

All this had been up to the evening of the incidents named in our opening chapter. Then, for the first time, had a change come over Maria's feelings and manner. On leaving Mrs. Hendley, she had retired to her apartments, endeavoring to prepare herself for the momentarily expected arrival of her husband, whom she longed, yet dreaded to meet. She received him with a restraint which she had great difficulty in disguising, and wept many bitter tears, as, anxiously remarking her changed and extraordinary manner, he looked reproachfully and fixedly at her, without, however, saying a word that was passing in his mind.

"Nay, nay, Ronayne; you think me reserved, altered, to-day; but indeed I am not well. The cause you shall know later, not now—it would be premature. I am a bad dissembler, and cannot look gay when my heart is full of anguish to overwhelming; but, my love, I must entreat a very great favor of you, which I know you will not refuse."

"Is there aught under heaven that I can refuse to my adored one?" returned Ronayne, tenderly clasping her to his breast; "no, Maria, you have a boon to ask, and the boon shall be granted."

"After all, it is not a very great deal," she remarked, with a sickly smile; "but I have a strong desire to ride to Hardscrabble to-morrow. You know it is long since I have been there, and I have a particular reason to visit it in

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the course of the afternoon to-morrow." Her voice trembled, and she felt ill at ease.

Her husband looked grave. "Nay, Maria, is this wise? You know, as you have just said, that you have not visited that scene since the death of your father; wherefore now, and simply to reopen a fast-closing wound?"

"It is for the reason," she said, "that I have so long neglected this duty that I am the more anxious to repair the seeming neglect."

"Your first visit," remarked Ronayne, half reproachfully, "methinks ought to have been to the grave of your poor mother. You have not been over to the cottage since her death."

Had an arrow passed through the heart of Mrs. Ronayne, it could not have imparted more exquisitely keen sensations than did that casual remark. She turned pale, but made no reply; nay, almost fell fainting on his bosom.

"What, my soul's beloved, is the matter? Nay, pardon me for bringing up again the memory so suddenly upon your gentle thought! I should have used more caution in renewing the recollection of the past."

"Say rather of the present," murmured Mrs. Ronayne, in a tone so low that she could not be distinctly heard by her husband. "Oh, this poor heart!"

"You spoke, Maria?"

"Oh, I did but repeat my dreamings to myself. I scarcely know what I said."

"Well, love, since you desire to ride to Hardscrabble to-morrow, I will even meet your wishes; and yet I know not how it is, but something tells me that ill will grow out of this."

"Oh, no, say not so," she suddenly exclaimed, sinking on her knees at his feet, and holding up her hands in an attitude of supplication; "can that be ill in your eyes which brings happiness to the heart of your loving wife? Pity rather the existence of those fears which cause her to tremble, lest the cup be dashed from her lips ere yet half tasted. Oh! I dare not speak more plainly—not yet—not yet—to-morrow—then shall the restraint be removed from my lips and heart, and, whatever be the result, you shall know all. I feel that to you I must appear to speak in parables and mystery; but oh, since yesterday, I feel that I am not myself."

She drooped her head upon his shoulder, and wept profoundly.

"Calm yourself, dearest; I will harass you with no more converse on this subject to-night. Let one remark suffice. I am afraid that Captain Headley will refuse permission for us to venture as far as Hardscrabble; he thinks it attended by risk to the officers on the part of the Indians; of course, much more to you."

"Nay, Ronayne, there cannot surely be a greater risk incurred there than in venturing on a fishing excursion, as you have done to-night. Besides, we need not let him know that we are going in that direction."

"What! you wicked mutineer," chided Ronayne, playfully, "do you recommend insubordination? Would you have me to disobey the orders of the commanding officer? Oh, fie!"

"Not exactly that," she returned, with a slight blush; "but gratify me only this once, and I will never allow you to break an order again."

"Nay, sweetcat, I did but jest; were my life the penalty, I would not deny you."

"Ah! how little does he think that more than life depends upon it," murmured Mrs. Ronayne to herself. "Or who could have supposed yesterday that my heart would have been oppressed by the feelings which assail it."

Wau-nan-gee—strange, wildly loving, fascinating, and incomprehensible boy—with what confidence do I repose on your truth; with what joy do I at length glory in that devotedness which has made you so wholly, so exclusively mine."

These words were abstractedly, almost involuntarily, uttered in a low tone, as Ronayne left the room in search of Doctor Von Voltenberg, who he was desirous should, for the better protection of his wife from accident, accompany them on their ride of to-morrow.

She herself soon retired for the night, but not to rest.

In that wild and simple garrison, where the germs of the heart and head alone shone forth, reflecting their brilliancy and beauty more forcibly from the fact of the very limitation of their sphere of contact, there was no sacrifice to the mere conventionalisms of inane fashion. Customs there were military customs, duly observed, and not less than treason against the state would it have been considered by Captain Headley, had any officer of his sallied forth without being duly caparisoned as a member of the corps to which he belonged; but in all things else, and where duty was not involved, each was free to adopt the style of costume or the general habits that best suited his own fancy. And, whenever inclined, they were suffered to leave the fort, and her dressed in the rough, shaggy blanket of the Canadian trapper or voyageur, or the more fanciful and picturesque dress of the Indian. This had not always been the case. Captain Headley had once been as severe as he now was indulgent, and the uttermost conformity of costume with the regulations of the United States had for a long period been exacted; but gradually, on finding, as he conceived, the Indians around him too favorably disposed to require the continuance of the imposing military parade with which it had been his policy to awe them, he had gradually relaxed in his system of discipline, conceding not more to his officers themselves than to his noble and amiable wife, who was ever the soother of whatever temporary differences sprang up between them, many little points of etiquette, to which formerly he had most scrupulously adhered.

Among the varieties of dresses possessed by Ensign Ronayne, was a very handsome one which the mother of Wau-nan-gee, for whom it was made, had disposed of to him; and this, when preparing for the ride the next day, his wife strongly advised him to wear. As he knew there could be no objection on the part of Captain Headley only to the direction in which they rode, and that only from the possibility of encountering a party of hostile Indians, and not to the costume itself, he laughingly remarked that her old flame, Wau-nan-gee, had certainly made a deeper impression on her heart than she was willing to admit, since no dress pleased her half so well as that which had once been worn by the gentle and dark-eyed youth.

For a moment or two she turned pale, and then suddenly flushing the deepest dye, as the sense of her husband's remark came fully upon her apprehension, she said, not without some pain and confusion, mingled with gentle reproach:—

"You seem to have forgotten, Ronayne, that that was the dress you wore on an occasion of danger, when life and death and happiness hung upon the issue. Might I not have the credit of prizing it on that account?"

"Nay, beloved one," he exclaimed, as he pressed her to his heart, "you know I did but jest. Then was my strong love for yourself, my protection and my shield; and if that love was powerful then, what irresistible strength has it attained now. Maria, I would fain desire to live for ever, if but to show the vastness and enduringness of my love for you."

"Ah! to what a trial am I to be subjected," she murmured, "and yet I would not shun it. Why has the calm deep current of our joy been thus cruelly interrupted, Ronayne? Should fate or circumstances ever interpose to separate us, will you always entertain for me the same ardent affection that you do now?"

"Heavens! why do you ask? What means this question? What is there to divide us? nay, even separate us for an hour?"

"Oh! I cannot explain myself," she returned. "I know I speak wildly, but I only mean in the possible event of anything of the kind. I do not say that it may or will happen; but you know it might. None of these things are impossible. We cannot control our destiny."

"Well, my love," remarked Ronayne, with a sigh, while an expression of gravity and sadness pervaded his features, "it cannot be denied that you have adopted some strange fancies this morning; firstly, a desire to visit Hard-cerabble, a place which you have always hitherto carefully avoided; secondly, to see me dressed in a costume which I have not worn since the occasion to which you have just adverted; and thirdly, to frighten me to death by even hinting at the possibility of separation. By the bye," he added, "it is a very long time since we have seen Wau-nan-gee. You know he disappeared the night of our marriage, and has never been seen since. I wonder what can have become of him. Would you not like once more, Maria, to see his handsome face? I shall never forget the eagerness with which he picked up the wedding-ring which I had let fall in the act of putting it on your finger, or the look of deep disappointment when I rather abruptly—nay, somewhat rudely—snatched it from him, as he tremblingly proceeded to complete that part of the ceremony himself. It certainly looked very ominous."

It was a great relief to Mrs. Ronayne when, at the very moment that her husband ceased speaking, a knock was heard at the door, and in the next moment the figure of Doctor Von Voltenberg crossed the threshold. He came to announce that the horses were already saddled, and waiting for them. With a heart full to oppression, she left the room, and regained her chamber. There she threw herself upon her knees at the bedside, and burst into a paroxysm of tears. It was the first time she had been alone since the occurrence at the summer-house; the first opportunity she had had of giving unrestrained indulgence to the powerful emotions that had for many hours hung like an immovable weight upon her soul. The first outburst of hitherto-suppressed feeling over, she became more calm. She felt that her long absence might excite surprise. A basin of cold water soon removed all traces of her tears, and in less than half an hour she had regained the party, her beautiful form clad in a dark green riding habit made of cloth of the lightest texture, and her full dark hair, surmounted by a straw hat tastily plaited and

fashioned by her own hands, and trimmed with a broad, pale, and richly-bordered ribbon.

Ronayne's eye caught her own as she entered. Never had she appeared so strikingly beautiful. He said nothing, but the rich Virginian blood mounted to his cheek, while his expressive eye conveyed, as plainly as language itself could render it, how ardent and enduring was his love.

That look heightened the color on her own enchanting face, but it was only for the moment, and evidently caused by some absorbing recollection of an absent friend. She turned away her head to conceal the tear that forced itself down her cheek and then everything being ready—for Ronayne had availed himself of her absence to assume his Indian dress—the party went to the barrack square, and were soon in the saddle.

"God bless her!" ejaculated Corporal Collins, as, after relinquishing the bridle he had held while her husband assisted her to mount, the graceful form of Mrs. Ronayne receded from his view, leaving him once more to resume his monotonous walk in front of the building. "Ah, there is nobody like that sweet lady!"

"There goes an angel!" said Sergeant Nixon in a low voice to his companions of the guard, all of whom off sentry had risen, and were now standing all attention, as the little party passed towards the gate.

"Isn't she a trump!" said another man of the guard—Weston. "See how she sits her horse—just as if she had been born to it."

"Sergeant Nixon," said Maria, in one of her sweetest tones, as she moved her horse towards the non-commissioned officer in passing.

The Sergeant touched his cap with marked respect.

"Should anything occur to detain us in our ride, let this packet be given to Mrs. Headley. Mind, Sergeant, certainly not before midnight."

"Your command shall be obeyed, Mrs. Ronayne. Should you return before midnight, it will be found with me; if not, I shall at once carry it to Mrs. Headley."

"Just so. Good by, Nixon!" and as she placed the packet in his possession, she pressed his hand, as if to signify that the proper execution of the commission was of some importance.

"What is it, Maria? what do you wait for?" asked Ronayne, reining in his horse to enable her to come up.

"Nothing. I am merely sending a trifling message to Mrs. Headley by Sergeant Nixon," and then putting her horse into a canter, she joined her cavaliers, and pursued with them the road that led along the right bank of a branch of the Chicago river to the Harbserabble farm.

CHAPTER IV.

You see this chase is hotly followed.—*Henry V.*

THE spot called Harbserabble was distant about two miles from Fort Dearborn, and had been the scene of a recent and bloody tragedy. They

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who are familiar with the events that occurred during a different and earlier phase of this tale are aware that, not four months previously, the father of Mrs. Ronayne had, as well as a faithful domestic, been cruelly murdered there, during a period of profound peace, by a party of Winnebagoes, and that, on the removal of his body to the grounds of the cottage near the fort, in which his wife and daughter resided, the house had been hermetically closed. The outrage upon Mr. Heywood had taken place early in April. It was now, as has already been said, the 7th of August, and within that period Mrs. Ronayne had drunk deeply of the cup of reciprocated wedded bliss, she had also known the anguish of the severance of every natural tie. Both her parents were buried near the summer-house, and, had it not been for the fervent love of her husband—a love that daily increased in purity and intensity—even the great strength of mind for which she was remarkable would have ill enabled her to endure the twofold shock. But, even with all his love, the natural melancholy of her character became tinged with an additional shade of seriousness, which, far from being displeasing, or detracting from the sweetness of her most expressive and faultless face, seemed to invest it with a newer and a holier charm. The perfection of her classic style of beauty given as Maria Heywood, may well justify a repetition here.

Above the middle size, her figure was at once gracefully and richly formed. Her face, of unclouded oval, was of a delicate olive tint, which well harmonized with eyes of a lustrous hazel, and hair of glossy, raven black, of rare amplitude and length. A mouth classically small, bordered by lips of coral fulness, disclosed, when she smiled, teeth white and even; while a forehead, high and denoting strong intellect, combined with a nose somewhat more aquiline than Grecian, to give dignity to a countenance that might otherwise have exhibited too much of a character of voluptuous beauty. Yet, although her features, when lighted up by vivacity or emotion, were radiant with intelligence, their expression when in repose was of a pensive cast, that, contrasted with her general appearance, gave to it a charm, addressed at once to sense and sentiment, of which it is impossible by description to give an adequate idea. A dimpled cheek—an arm, hand, and foot, that might have served the statuary as a model, completed a person which, without exaggeration, might be deemed almost, if not wholly, faultless.

For some minutes, as the party rode along the road bordering on the serpentine branch of the Chicago leading to Hardscrabble, Mrs. Ronayne, apprehensive that her husband might attribute any appearance of depression of spirits to physical illness, and insist on postponing her ride to some future occasion, fell, as most people do who are sensible that for the first time in their lives they are acting with insincerity, into the very opposite extreme. With a consciousness of wrong at her heart—with a soul distracted with uncertainty and hesitancy as to the result of the course she was pursuing—she indulged in a gaiety that, in her, was wholly unnatural. She rattled, talked, laughed with ill-timed volubility—offered to make wagers with the surgeon and Ronayne that she would take her horse over the highest fallen log, or, if they preferred it, swim with either of them across the river, and lastly proposed that they should start together and see who would first reach the farm-house. All this time the deepest scarlet was on her cheek, her manner

betrayed the most feverish excitement, and there was unwonted brilliancy in her eyes.

Ronayne looked at her earnestly. Suddenly a change came over her, for she had remarked, and felt confused under the penetrating glance which seemed to tell her that she did not feel that lightness of heart with the semblance of which she was seeking to deceive him. For the first time since her marriage—nay, for the first time since his acquaintance with her—and this had been of more than two years' date—he felt pain—pain inflicted by her. There was evidently some secret thought at her heart which she withheld: and she who had never before concealed a passing emotion of her soul, was now wrapped up in an unaccountable mystery.

In proportion with her husband's increasing gravity, Mrs. Ronayne's spirits became depressed, until in reality enfeebled by her strong previous excitement, she looked pale as death itself, and expressed a desire for a glass of water.

Deeply touched and alarmed by the sudden change which had taken place in his wife's appearance and manner, Ronayne threw himself from his horse, and, being provided with a silver drinking cup, flew to the river to fill it. In order to obtain the liquid pure and cool, however, it was necessary to turn a small and acute point of underwood, a little to the right, where a few rude stone steps led to a sort of natural well, where, even in the hottest day of summer, the beverage came fresh as from a coral fountain. It was a spot well known to every frequenter of that road, and few passers-by ever drank from any other source.

The young officer was in the act of dipping his cup into the stream, when three shots were distinctly heard in the neighborhood of Hardscrabble, then about half a mile distant, and after the interval of a few seconds, the rapid galloping of horses' hoofs behind him. With an inconceivable dread of he knew not what at his heart, he sprang round the point of wood to gain the road where he had left his wife and Von Voltenberg. To his astonishment both were gone. They were the hoofs of their horses he had heard—his own was tied to a tree, as he had left him, and making endeavors to free himself, that he might follow his companions.

We will not attempt to describe the feelings of Ronayne. The mere disappearance of the party might have been accounted for, had it not been for the shots which preceded. But the association was terrible. It bewildered him—almost deprived him of thought and judgment. Evidently, there was an enemy in the neighborhood: but, even if so, why the obvious advance into the very heart of danger: for from the direction of the sound, he could have no doubt that one horse, at least, had taken the direction of Hardscrabble, and that, from the regular and rapid footfall of the animal, he felt assured was his wife's.

What could this mean? Mrs. Ronayne's he knew to be a very spirited young horse, and the only manner in which he could explain her absence was by inferring that, startled by the report of the firearms, he had suddenly run away with her, and that Von Voltenberg had followed as speedily as he could to check him.

He dashed the cup of water to the earth, mounted, and dug his spurs in the flanks of his horse, when the latter, bounding forward with agony under the exquisite sense of pain, seemed rather to leap than run over the ground.

Fifty yards from the point where he started, something glancingly white on the ground frightened the animal and caused him to shy so abruptly, even while continuing his speed, that Romayne, excellent horseman as he was, had great difficulty in preserving his seat. Rapid as was the glance obtained of the object, he at once recognised it for the habit collar of his wife, and therefore all uncertainty was at an end as to the direction her horse had taken. His heart was full, but he had scarcely power to think. A thousand incidents and fears seemed to crowd upon his brain at the same time, and in such confusion that he felt as though his very reason were deserting him. The recollection of the strong presentiment of evil which he had expressed in regard to this ride came with tenfold force on his mind, and scarce left a hope to weigh against the fears that overwhelmed him.

Still he dashed on, straining his eyes as though he would have to bled the extent of his vision, looking searchingly into every opening into the wood, and endeavoring to distinguish, amid the rapid sounds produced by his own horse's hoofs, those of his companions. It seemed an age while he passed over the ground outside of them from the fatal farmhouse. At length the orchard attached to it came in view, and then the garden, and on the broad lane which separated both, the large walnut tree the branches of which, two months before covered with snowy blossoms, were now bent low by the weight of their own fruitfulness. In another instant, he was in the centre of the open space. Uncertain what course to follow now, he checked his generous steed so suddenly and fiercely as to throw him upon his haunches. Everything was still. Beyond the breathing of his own horse, there was not a sound to indicate the existence of animal life. The Indians had evidently destroyed all the stock on the farm since its abandonment, and melancholy appeared here to have established universal dominion. This suspense was torture—the silence horrible. He would rather have heard the Indian scalp-cry—heard the death-creek—anything, provided it would guide him to the form of her he loved. Beyond this forest there was nothing that could be called a road. A few narrow footpaths diverged from it into the forest, but these were merely sufficiently broad for the passage by Indian file, except on the immediate verge of the river, where horse and rider might barely escape collision with the branches. The bank, over which this apology for a highway ran, was composed of a sandy soil, so that sound was not absolutely necessary to the assurance that horsemen were on that road. From its absence, however, in every other quarter, the distracted officer was naturally led to infer that they whom he so anxiously sought had taken that direction, and thither he determined to follow. But a second thought induced him to turn the angle of the house, before leaving, that he might not have to reproach himself later with having left anything unexamined behind. To his great surprise he found the door, which he had himself hermetically closed many weeks before, wide open. His first purpose, after sweeping his eye rapidly but keenly around the half-trodden cornfield in the rear, was to enter. This, in order not to lose time, and the rude aperture being sufficiently large, he did without dismounting.

As his horse sprang in, he thought he could distinguish a moose-eased foot just at the moment of its hurried disappearance into the loft above, but everything was so still that he felt satisfied his distempered imagination and excited feeling, running on one all-absorbing subject, had deceived him.

He looked around. Two dark objects attracted his attention, in the farthest corner from him, of the room, the shutters of which being closed, yielded but an indistinct light to one coming suddenly from the open air. He moved his horse, stooping low himself as he advanced to that end of the rude apartment, and beheld to his surprise, two small trunks of black leather, on one of which was painted in rather large letters "Maria Heywood." The other had no name upon it, but he could have pledged his existence that, not one week previously, he had seen it in his own apartment, and that it was his. That, however, might be a mistake, for it was difficult to distinguish with certainty; but in regard to the proprietorship of the other there could be no question, and the only reasonable manner in which he could account for their being there at that moment, was, that the trunks had been in use by Mr. Heywood at the period of his murder, and that, having been overlooked by the Indians, they had been locked up, on closing the farm-house altogether.

It must not be supposed that the young officer took as much time to comprehend and draw inferences from what he saw, as we have taken in the description. A few rapid glances only were thrown around, when, satisfied that there was no more to aid him in his search, he turned his horse's head to gain the broader pathway which, it has already been said, bordered on the river. Again he sallied from the house, but his emotions of alarm and surprise may be conceived—not springing from any personal consideration, but from the certainty he now entertained of the probable fate of his wife—when, on gaining the exterior, he perceived, not fifty yards from him, a party of Indians, about twenty in number, some scattered along the edge of the wood, and others peering cautiously around the corners of the outbuildings. Although his heart sank within him at the sight, and the image of his Maria was at the moment uppermost in his thoughts—mood palpably before him as she looked at the very moment when she stood first equipped for this most unfortunate ride—his keen and collected eye could distinguish the very color of the war paint, for they were in full costume, and the peculiar decorations that told them to be of their old and inveterate enemies the Winnebagoes.

There are epochs in life when the thoughts of years crowd upon the mind in little more than moments. All the past then seems to flash full upon the recollection, and in such rapid yet distinct succession, that the only surprise is how the brain can sustain the torturing and confounding weight. No one incident of the slightest interest had ever occurred to his wife and himself that Ronayne did not recal vividly, keenly, even while gazing on those men of blood; and he suffered anguish of heart, physical as well as mental, which none can understand who have not experienced that rending asunder of the soul which follows the loss of that in which the soul alone lives. Presently, as his quick eye glanced rapidly along the wood, he saw, to his increasing dismay, Von Voltenberg brought forward to its edge by two other Indians leading the horse by the bridle. He was, evidently, a prisoner. Oh, how he strained his eyes with painful, with agonizing earnestness, to behold her whom he expected to behold next, and how rapidly rose the feeling of hope and exultation when he found no second prisoner appear. He now felt assured that his last chance of recovering the lost one lay in his pursuing the course he had at first selected. The

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prospect of eluding his enemies and gaining that road was poor, for there was but one way open to him—almost in their very teeth—yet this he was resolved to try. Death was before him if he hesitated; although, had he beheld his wife a prisoner, he would rather have shared a similar fate than abandoned her in her extremity, now that a hope had sprung up in his heart—his energies were aroused, and renewed activity braced his limbs.

CHAPTER V.

On the right of the farm-house called Hardscrabble, as it faced the water, there was a kitchen garden, the fence of which was quite five feet high, and scattered about within this were standing, now almost shrivelled up from age, many clusters of peas and beans pending lazily and languidly from their poles. To force his way across this fence, and then diagonally through the garden in order to gain the opposite corner and cross into the road beyond, was now the sole object of the young officer; but before putting it in practice, he called out in a loud and distinct voice to Von Voltenberg to know what had become of his wife, and whether she too was a prisoner. But there was no answer. The Doctor had evidently been enjoined not to reply, for, immediately after he had put his question, Ronayne saw an Indian hold up his tomahawk menacingly to the prisoner, and heard him utter some words as if to enjoin silence. Seemingly desirous, however, at all risk to satisfy his friend, Von Voltenberg suddenly raised his hand, and seemed to point significantly over his shoulder in an oblique direction to the rear. This convinced Ronayne that he had been correct in his conjecture, for the direction was the road he intended taking. Gathering himself up in his saddle, he slowly walked his horse about twenty paces towards the edge of the forest. This was done both for the purpose of preventing any suspicion of an attempt at flight, and of giving sufficient run for his leap. Then suddenly wheeling round, he put the animal to his speed, and, amid the loud shouts of the Indians, who rushed forward from every point to overtake him, accomplished the desperate leap, the tips of his horse's hoofs just grazing as he passed. Encumbered with their arms as they were, it took each Indian, however active, at least a second to clear the fence, and this gave the young officer considerable advantage of distance; but what surprised him was that not a shot was fired. It seemed as though his pursuers thought it beneath their dignity to fire at a single fleeing man, whom they were certain of taking, and matter of rivalry with all to be the first to reach and secure. Onward they pressed now without uttering a sound; but the rattling of their war ornaments, with the crackling of the decayed vegetation beneath their feet, told Ronayne that they were too near for him to hope for escape, unless his horse should clear the opposite corner of the field, and of this he almost despaired, jaded as the animal was by previous exertion through the heavy ground he was now traversing. Fortunately he found that there was a perceptible declivity as he approached the water, and not merely that, but that one of the rails of the zigzag fence had been detached. Desperate as his position was, this gave him renewed confidence, and he even ventured to turn and examine the number and position of his

enemies. They were some twenty in number, all painted perfectly black, and dispersed at long intervals throughout the field. In front of all was a very young warrior, who seemed the most emulous of the party to secure the honor of the capture, for the leaps he took were prodigious, and it was evident that nothing but the clearing of the fence could save the closely-pursued officer from capture. Again his horse took the leap, and this time easily enough; and even while in the very act, he thought, he fancied, he heard a voice behind him softly pronounce his name. In the confusion of his mind, however, he could not judge distinctly of anything. It might have been the sighing of the wind among the dried leaves and tendrils that floated from the bean-poles at his side, and he regarded it not. His mind was too much intent on, too much absorbed on weightier matters to heed the occurrence. The air from the water revived, reinvigorated both himself and his horse. Again at full speed, he dashed on along its margin until suddenly, after having gone over nearly a mile of ground, the conviction arose to him that he must have been wrong in his comprehension of Von Voltenberg's sign, and that the beloved of his soul—she for the uncertainty of whose fate his heart suffered an anguish the most horrible, was not before him, but a prisoner with her companion. That thought, growing rapidly into assurance, was sufficient to destroy all energy. He checked his horse, and brought him to a full stand. As a soldier, whose services belonged to his country, he felt that he had no right to throw himself into a position that would render those services useless, but at least he would take no unnecessary trouble to avoid it. He turned to listen to the sounds of his pursuers, now fully resolved to make no further attempt at escape. He heard nothing but the rustling of the leaves and the gurgling of the water over the shallow and pebbly portions of its bed. He retraced his way at a walk. That was his direct course to the fort, and he was determined leisurely to pursue it, taking the chapter of accidents as it might be opened to him. Soon he came to the point where he had first leaped the garden fence. He looked within. There was not an Indian to be seen. That they were lurking somewhere around him, he felt perfectly assured, and at each moment he expected to see them start up and seize his horse by the bridle. But although he now rode slowly, carelessly, his eye was everywhere. The pathway he followed led along a strip some twenty feet in width, between the garden fence and the river, to the bottom of the clearing or lawn that ran to the edge of the latter. Keenly he glanced towards the skirt of the forest on his left where he had first beheld the savages with their prisoner, but not a sign of one of them was to be seen. All this was certainly most extraordinary and unaccountable, but Ronayne knew the character of Indian stratagem too well not to feel assured that the very next moment succeeding that of this serpent-like quietude, might be replete with excitement, and he was prepared for its occurrence. He dreaded to advance. He almost feared that he should not be seen. Every step forward in safety increased the distance which separated him from the idol of his soul, and the purest air of heaven had no sweetness for him that was not breathed with her. His head drooped upon his breast—he could hear the beating of his own heart. He prayed inwardly, secretly, fervently to God to restore to him his wife as by a miracle, and save him from the madness of despair. When he again raised his head, he was startled but not surprised to see his further progress interrupted by

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a dozen Indians, springing up as it were from the very bowels of the earth, and standing in the same careless and unexcited attitude in which he had beheld them at the outset. Mechanically wheeling his horse to escape by the lane, he beheld a similar display. He was evidently hemmed in. His further advance or retreat was completely intercepted.

Truly has it been said, we are the creatures of circumstance. A moment before, and while there was no enemy visible, Romayne had felt the utmost indifference in regard to a fate the bitterness of which would, at least, have been sweetened by the fact of his being near to solace and sustain his wife. He could not believe that it was the purpose of the warriors to do them bodily harm; for, had that been their intention, they would, without doubt, have fired at him, when they found themselves foiled in their recent pursuit; and such was the devotedness of love of the man, that forgetting under the circumstances the sterner duty of the officer, he would have preferred the tent and bonds of the savage *for ever* with her to the comforts and freedom of his own home, when the presence of the loved and familiar being in whom alone he lived should no longer give life and interest to the latter. But now a sudden change in his plans was resolved upon, for the same glance which had fallen on the warriors in his front, had enabled him to see, in the distance, that Von Voltenberg, profiting probably by the carelessness of those left in charge, was moving stealthily and alone between the cornfield and the building, behind which he soon disappeared. The quickening sound of hoofs immediately succeeding attested that he was in full flight, and then a rapid association of ideas brought to the strongly imaginative mind of the young officer the conviction that his wife had escaped too, for he felt assured that Von Voltenberg would not abandon her. What the object was in endeavoring to secure himself he could not tell. The Indians had evidently some more than ordinary motive in his capture, or wherefore their great anxiety to take him unhurt, and their seeming indifference in regard to the other prisoners, who had been left almost unguarded. There might be two reasons for this. Firstly, they might be on their war-path, and therefore might not find it either convenient or desirable to incumber themselves, on a march, with a woman; and, secondly, having discovered the Doctor to be a "medicine man"—a fact of which he would not have failed to apprise them—they might not feel themselves permitted by the Great Spirit to detain him, and therefore, without absolutely releasing, gave him the opportunity for escape.

Of course, all these reflections were the result of but a momentary action of the brain. Romayne, with much warmth and impetuosity of character, was of quick and sound apprehension, and at once saw the advantages or disadvantages of an extreme position. To advance or retire, as has already been remarked, was impossible, for both in front and rear stood the warriors leaning carelessly on their guns, as if they expected at each moment that he would come up and surrender himself. But, whatever his previous musings, half-nursed in the determination, such was now far from being the intention of the Virginian. Certain that he would be fired at, his main object was to prevent their closing with him so far as to impede his action. In order to prevent nearer advance upon him, therefore, he pulled his pocket handkerchief from the bosom of his hunting-shirt, and waved it over his head in token of submission. Guttural sounds of approbation broke from

the warriors, amid which he thought he could hear the voice of his wife earnestly calling upon his name, in the distance. He looked, but saw nothing. The idea that she had been suffered to make her escape grew stronger. He felt assured, for the sounds of horses' hoofs had ceased, that she was lingering for him to join her; that she had seen him wave the handkerchief, and that, fearing he was about to deliver himself into the hands of his enemies, she had uttered that cry to indicate her position. Apparently in the certainty of their prisoner, the Indians both above and below had thrown themselves at the side of the lane under the fence, some even commencing to fill and smoke their pipe tomahawks. This again was the moment of action. To leap the fence at this time was out of all question, but the river was unusually deep immediately on his right. Rapidly he wheeled his horse, and, bearing him up with a strong arm, as he reached the bank, while he forced the rowels of his spurs into his flanks, caused him to bound over nearly one third of the narrow stream. Almost before the Indians had time to recover from their surprise and dash in after him, he was nearly across. As he ascended the opposite bank, and gained the road above, another cry from the same voice rang upon his ears. He looked and beheld at one of the windows of the farm-house a form evidently that of a woman, the outline and dress of which he could not, however, distinguish, reclining negligently, almost motionless, on the bosom of the youngest warrior, who had evinced such earnestness in his desire to capture him. Alternately, as Ronayne continued his course to the fort, along that bank of the Chicago, the youth pealed forth the peculiar war-whoop of his tribe, and waved, seemingly, the very pocket handkerchief which the unhappy officer had a few moments before thrown down as an earnest of his submission. Was this meant as a reproach or a threat? He could not tell; but certainly he felt that he deserved the former in their eyes, who had shown him so much mercy. In less than ten minutes he had passed over the intermediate ground, his ear aching on the stretch to catch the sounds of horses' hoofs on the opposite bank—that bank which, not two hours previously, he had traversed with a bright hope, if not with a heart wholly free from anxiety—but in vain. Furiously, wildly, he rode into the fort. He was haggard, pale, and dripping from the immersion he had so recently undergone. His first inquiry at the gate, on entering, was if Mrs. Ronayne had returned. Being answered in the negative, life itself seemed to be annihilated; and, overcome by the overwhelming agony he had endured for the last two hours, he gave a frightful shriek of despair, and, on gaining the centre of the parade, fell fainting from his horse to the ground, as we have already seen at the close of our opening chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

"My particular grief is of so floodgate and overbearing nature, that it engulfs and wallows other sorrows."—*Othello*.

NEVER did day close more cheerlessly on the hearts of men, than that which succeeded to the occurrences detailed in our chapter. Yea, it was a terrible blow which had been inflicted upon all. The sun of the existence

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of each, from the commanding officer to the youngest drummer-boy, had been dimmed; and many a weather-beaten soldier, grown grey in the natural apathy of age, now found himself unable to restrain the rising tear. Not a woman, not a child arrived at the years of consciousness, but missed and mourned the absence of her who had been, not merely the favorite, but the beloved of the whole garrison.

The young Virginian himself was, for the moment, the only exception to this mental anguish. When taken up from the ground to which he had fallen, and borne to his room, he was in a high fever and delirious from excitement—unconscious of everything around. He did not manifest a sense of the nature and extent of his grief by exclamations of despair, or reference to the past, but lay like one stupified, his cheek highly flushed, his eyes fixed and upturned, his hands clasped across his chest, his breathing scarcely audible, and seemingly without the power of combination of thought, or the exercise of memory.

When Von Voltenberg soon afterwards followed, he at once saw that congestion of the brain was rapidly forming, and immediately prepared to bleed him. The room, which, first filled with sorrowing soldiers and their wives, not only excluded the necessary air, but impeded action, was now urgently requested to be cleared, and none remained but Mrs. Headley, Mrs. Elmsley, Mr. Romayne's servant Catherine, and Corporal Collins, who, having been relieved from his duty as orderly, had entreated the surgeon to permit him to render what service might be required during the young officer's illness. There was no fastidious or misplaced delicacy here. Mrs. Headley had ever felt as a mother towards the Virginian, Mrs. Elmsley as a sister, and, even had this not been the case, the strong affection they bore to his wife would have led them to attend the sick couch of the husband. One supported his shoulder as he was raised in his bed, the other took his extended hand, while Corporal Collins, looking much paler and more frightened than either of them, held the basin. If Von Voltenberg was not particularly given to fasting, or loved the punch made of the horrid whiskey distilled in those days in the west, he was, nevertheless, a skillful surgeon. With a steady hand he now divided the vein, when forth gushed a stream of blood so dark and discolored that the significant and triumphant shake of the head which he gave clearly indicated what would have been the result had the bleeding been delayed much longer.

Greatly relieved by the removal of the oppressive weight, the unhappy ensign opened his eyes, and became sensible of objects, but it was only that consciousness might render him even more keenly alive to the horror of his position. Each article of furniture and dress around the room brought increased desolation to his heart. There was the harp Maria was wont to touch with such exquisite grace. There was the dress she had thrown off to assume her riding habit—for it will be recollected that the officers of that post had no gilded suites of apartments at their command, but barely a couple of barrack rooms for the married men, and one for the single. Now a shoe caught his eye, now a glove, a hat, a slipper, her dressing-case; even the tiny tumbler with which she had worked the men upon his back; each and all of these, endearing yet painful to the sight from the recollections they brought up, he glanced at alternately, until his feelings were so wrought upon that he was almost frantic.

"Take those things away!" he cried, starting up and pointing to them; "I cannot endure the sight. They will kill me—ay, worse than kill—tear my heart-strings with slow agony. Ah! dear Mrs. Headley—Mrs. Elmsley—both of you, who loved Maria so well—can you not understand the pangs I suffer! Yesterday I could have defied the world in the vain pride of my happiness and strength; to-day I feel that I am more wretched than the slave that tugs at his chain—more feeble than a child. Would to heaven that I could die within this hour! Oh, God! oh, God! oh, God! how shall I endure this!"

He turned on his side, buried his face in the pillow, and sobbed and wept, until every one around had caught the deep infection of his profound suffering. The lips of Corporal Collins, as he stood stiff in his military attitude, were closely compressed, and his brow was contracted. A sympathy, traceable on each quivering muscle, was evidently struggling for mastery, and he turned abruptly round. Had others taken time from their own sorrow to watch his next movement, they might have seen him raise his hand to his lips, and drain deeply from a flask he had taken from the bosom of his uniform. Mrs. Elmsley, with her face buried in her hands, leaned against one of the foot-posts of the bed; and Mrs. Headley—the majestic Mrs. Headley, with more complex feelings at her heart than actuated the others—kneeling at the head of the bed, laid her hand upon the shoulder of the patient, and conjured him, in tones that marked her own deep sorrow, to bear the trial like a man, and not destroy himself by unavailing grief. Yet, even as she spoke, the tears fell copiously upon the bed.

"Mrs. Headley," said Von Voltenberg, who afterwards admitted that, in the whole course of his practice, he had never been similarly touched, "do not check him. Let him give full vent to this emotion, for painful as it now is, both to himself and to us who witness it, this outburst once exhausted, the crisis once past, there will be less fear of a return. See, already the paroxysm is weaker—he is more calm—both mind and body are worn out, and if he can but sleep for a few hours, although he may perhaps awaken to more acute sorrow, no danger to his life need be apprehended."

Notwithstanding this remark was made in little more than a whisper, it was distinctly heard by the sufferer. Suddenly starting up again in his bed, he turned quickly round to the surgeon, and said, in a tone of reproach—

"And is this all the consolation you have to offer me? What! tell me that I shall awaken to keener pain than that which now racks my being, and drag on a miserable life! Of what value that life to me? But stay, my mind is not yet itself, or how is it that I have not yet questioned you about my wife! Dear Von Voltenberg!" and he threw the hand of the recently-punctured arm upon the shoulder of the surgeon, "what news have you of Maria? Tell me of her safety; say that you have rescued her and that I shall see her again, and I will for ever bless the voice that saves me from despair. Oh, Von Voltenberg! speak, speak! surely you could never have had the baseness to desert her. How were you taken? how have you escaped? and why alone?"

"Poor Ronayne! would to God that I could give you consolation; but, alas! I cannot. She fell into the hands of the Indians before I did, and I saw her borne rapidly to the rear of the farm-house; me they took to the

road where you saw me. From that moment I never once beheld her; but reassure yourself, all may yet be well. True, she is a prisoner, but I apprehend no violence, for the Indians offered none to myself, and I thought that they showed unaccountable moderation to you, never firing a shot when you had so completely baffled them in the chase. It was that which gave me confidence to attempt my own escape, when I saw them all pressing forward to secure you, leaving me altogether unguarded. But we will speak of this no more to-night. You must sleep, Romaine, if you would have strength to enter upon action to-morrow. From the appearance of their encampment, not twenty paces in rear of the spot where you beheld me, I have reason to think that it has been established there many days, and that Mrs. Romaine may yet be rescued, for the party of Indians does not exceed five-and-twenty men. What they want is, doubtless, ransom, a few blankets or guns."

"Oh! say you so; bless you for that!" continued the Virginian, eagerly; "yes, I will be calm—seek rest to restore me for the morning; I will see Captain Headley, and entreat him to let me take out a detachment. Oh! he will not refuse me. Do you think he will, Mrs. Headley? Surely you will plead for me. I know twenty brave fellows who will cheerfully volunteer for the duty."

"Alas!" said Mrs. Headley, with a deep despondency at her heart, "I fear I can give you no encouragement there, Romaine; I am quite satisfied, indeed, that Headley will not suffer a man to leave the fort at this crisis."

"Crisis! what crisis!" interrupted the youth vehemently. "Obdurate man, has the past not cured him of his martinism? By heaven, let him refuse me, and I, alone and without permission, will go in search of my wife. Fool, fool that I was to return now without her; but I had hoped she was here;" and again he burst into another wild agony of grief.

Corporal Collins touched his cap and advanced a pace forward.

"The Captain said this afternoon that the next time your honor left the fort you should never return to it. I thought it was my duty, your honor, to tell you, for I couldn't make out what he meant."

"Oh! he did, did he?" muttered Romaine, with sudden calm. "Well, be it so!"

"Corporal Collins," said Mrs. Headley sternly to him, as she arose from her kneeling posture, "you would have done better to have held your peace on a matter which you say you do not comprehend. Mr. Romaine has annoyance sufficient without your misinterpreting to him an observation of his commanding officer, which, in all probability, was made in any other spirit than that which your words would convey."

The corporal made a respectful obeisance and withdrew into the corridor, rebuked.

"Romaine," pursued Mrs. Headley, "I can make all allowance for your excited feelings. I will speak to Headley on the matter; and, although I cannot hold out to you any hope that he either will even acknowledge the necessity, much less take the action you desire, I feel perfectly assured that, when you have heard his reasons, you will agree with us both that it would neither be of avail nor politic to take a step of this kind for the recovery of her whom we all deplore—God knows, no one more bitterly than myself."

"Mrs. Headley, you surprise me; I can scarcely believe that I understand you rightly. I had always thought your feelings towards Maria were those of a mother for her child?"

"Even so, Ronayne. You judged them rightly. As a mother I have loved, and love her still; but we will talk of all this to-morrow morning, and I leave you now to the quiet, if rest is not to be hoped for, that you so much require; for Headley needs all his officers in important council to-morrow, prior to holding a second immediately after with our Indian allies. Nay," seeing that all present looked surprised, and a desire to know wherefore, "it were idle to enter upon the subject now; sufficient be it to know that it is one of the deepest importance, and that, even should you be carried there in a litter, Ronayne—but God forbid the necessity!—you must be present."

"At what hour does that council assemble, Mrs. Headley?" asked the ensign.

"At midday, I believe. Winnebeg has been desired to bring the chiefs to the glacia, between the flagstaff and the southern block-house, at two o'clock precisely.

"What! Winnebeg returned?" exclaimed Ronayne, as he impetuously rose in his bed. "Ah, then there is hope. He will aid me in my enterprise. And what of Wau-nan-gee? Is he, too, here, Mrs. Headley? Yes, he must be. Oh, this is indeed providential! I shall rise with the dawn, and seek them both. Everything can be accomplished, if at all, before the hour of our own council arrives."

Mrs. Headley cast a look of profound sadness on him, as, taking his hot hand in hers, she said—

"Wau-nan-gee did not come with Winnebeg, Ronayne; but there is reason to believe that he is not far from the camp of the Pottowatomies, for he was seen yesterday. Yet he will not aid you in your proposed enterprise."

"Oh! Mrs. Headley, you do him wrong—indeed you do. Wau-nan-gee loves Maria too well not to risk his life for her. You little know the strength of his generous attachment, if you doubt his interest in her preservation."

"I know that his love for her is great—perhaps too much so," she replied, emphatically, after a moment's pause, while bending over to adjust his pillow, and in a voice so subdued as to be inaudible to all but himself.

CHAPTER VII.

RONAYNE'S pale cheek became suddenly scarlet. He perceived from the tone and look that accompanied the words that suspicion of some kind, whence derived he knew not, had entered into the mind of Mrs. Headley, and that she saw in the regard of the young Indian for his wife, evidence of a prepossession which might prove dangerous to his peace. But this, to a mind generous and impetuous as that of the highly-gifted officer, brought no alarm. Conscious of the entire possession of the heart and confidence of his wife, it was a source of speculative pride, rather than of concern to him.

that the warm-hearted and heartified Indian, at once brave, boy-like, and handsome, should, with a cheek glowing, and an eye beaming with over-whelming softness, feel and betray all the power of her beauty when exposed to the influence of its presence. It was a compliment to himself—to his own taste and judgment, and, had this been possible, would have increased his love for her on whom nature, hand in hand with the graces, had lavished such adornments of disposition and person as to compel a homage which rarely came to woman from such a quarter. The love of Wau-nan-gee had been known to both, but it had always been regarded as the innocent and enthusiastic preference of the boy who had scarcely yet learned to comprehend the new and strange emotion struggling for development in his heart. It had often been the topic of their conversation; and many a smile, half crimsoning into a blush, had Ronayne culled up to the brow of his young wife, while playfully adverting to the equal right to invest her with the marriage ring, which he had so eagerly manifested on the evening of their union. And, if he had shown a humor on that occasion which displeased or hurt the Indian it was not from any unworthy jealousy of the act he had sought to perform, but because he was ashamed of his own awkwardness, exhibited on such an occasion and in presence of his bride. Since that night Wau-nan-gee had disappeared, and both by the husband and wife had his absence been deeply regretted, for they both loved the youth, not only for the services he had rendered, but the interest his gentleness of deportment and retiring modesty had inspired.

If, therefore, he changed color at the remark of Mrs. Headley, it was not because a guilty passion was hinted at as influencing the boy, or because, even if it did, that he much heeded it, but because he thought it was meant to suggest that the danger would come from the tenderness of her who had inspired it. For the moment he felt mortified at the possibility of such an idea being entertained, and, had Mrs. Headley made the remark she did, except in his own ear, Ronayne would have expressed himself accordingly.

"He cannot love her too well," was his reply; "oh, no, that is my chief hope. Think you that I should be calm as I am, did I not, now that I know he is returned, feel assured that his strong yet pure attachment for her will cause him to head a strong band for her rescue? I am better now—I am determined to be better; for at the first dawn I will go forth and seek Wau-nan-gee. We shall not be five hours away; and, long before the council assembles, we shall again, I am confident, be reunited. Ah, what a long night until then! would that it were dawn!"

"That were of no use," returned Mrs. Headley, gravely and aloud. "I know that the strictest orders were issued immediately after your return, to allow neither officer nor man to leave the fort, unless passed by Headley himself."

"Or I shall never return, I suppose," muttered the Virginian bitterly; "well, we shall see;" and he ground his teeth together fiercely.

"Ronayne," said Mrs. Headley, "spare your bitterness. You will know to-morrow what Headley meant by his remark; yet promise me one thing before I leave you, that before you seek to leave the fort, you will see me in the morning, in my apartments. If, then, I fail to satisfy you of the reasons which exist against your entertaining any hopes of success in the enterprise you meditate, I think I may venture to say that I shall obtain of

Headley not to oppose you. But, stay! on consideration, it will be better that what I have to urge should be said at once. This is no time or occasion for mere forms or ceremonies. There is too much at stake. I shall leave you now, and return, alone, in little more than an hour. You will dismiss Collins for the night, desiring him to close the door—not fasten it, so that I may make no noise—and no difficulty in entering. Better that you go out to your bed-room, here, in the privacy of your own room, than reveal by your excitement to others that which should be known only to ourselves."

"Good heaven! what can all this mean? what can it portend?" exclaimed the startled officer.

"Prepare yourself for no pleasant communication, Ronayne," continued Mrs. Headley, sadly; "I must wound, yet I trust but to heal; one point I would have you question Von Voltenberg on before I go—the manner in which Maria fell into the hands of the Indians."

During this short and low conversation, Mrs. Elmsley and Von Voltenberg had been talking aside on the same subject, the former continuing to weep quietly but bitterly for the loss of her friend. Ronayne now questioned the surgeon in regard to the cause of the suddenness of their departure from the point where he had dismounted to procure water.

Von Voltenberg replied that he scarcely knew himself, but his own impression was that Mrs. Ronayne had started off her horse the moment the shots were fired—he supposed in the very exaggerated spirit of wantonness which had marked her actions ever since leaving the fort. He had mechanically followed in courtesy, and the result was as has been seen—her sudden captivity by the war party, who had hurried her off, almost unresistingly, he knew not whither, while he himself was taken in the direction in which Ronayne had seen him.

"Did she scream—did she express alarm when taken?" asked Mrs. Headley.

"No; I cannot say that she did," returned the Doctor, somewhat surprised, and not comprehending the motive for the question; "but you know Mrs. Ronayne is a woman of great nerve and presence of mind. Moreover, as the thing was done in a moment, she must have been too greatly astonished to understand her danger, for she came abruptly on the Indians on turning the sharp angle of the road leading up to the house."

Mrs. Headley's eyes met those of Ronayne with grave meaning. He seemed to understand her, and when, with Mrs. Elmsley, she had departed, he threw himself back upon his pillow, and, closing his eyes, mused deeply. To the inquiry of Von Voltenberg, he replied that, feeling disposed to rest a little, he would not trouble him to sit up longer, but begged him to retire, and to send Collins to his barrack-room, leaving his door on the latch, in case he should be summoned by the commanding officer for any purpose before morning.

As Mrs. Headley separated for the night from Mrs. Elmsley, and approached her own door, a man in uniform came up, touched his cap respectfully, and presented a packet.

"This parcel, Mrs. Headley, I received from Mrs. Ronayne on leaving the fort this afternoon, with the direction that I should hand it to you if she did not return by midnight. Alas! ma'am, we have every reason to fear the

dear lady will never return; twelve o'clock has just struck, and I am come to fulfil my trust."

"Thank you, Sergeant Nixon. As you say, I fear there is little hope of Mrs. Ronayne returning; but this package may possibly throw some light on the cause of her absence."

"Oh! I hope so; yet how should it, ma'am? she could not have known what was going to happen when she went out."

"No—true, Nixon, you are right. I suppose it contains something that she has borrowed, or that I have asked her for. Ah! I recollect now—it is some embroidery she worked for me. Good night, sergeant; or do you wish to see Captain Headley?"

"No, ma'am, I only came to deliver the package which Mrs. Ronayne seemed so anxious you should get to-night."

"There was no such very great hurry about it," returned Mrs. Headley, carelessly, yet not without agitation; "I would to heaven she had been here to give it to me herself!"

"Amen!" solemnly returned the sergeant; "I would willingly lose my left arm, could I see her sweet face in Fort Dearborn again."

"Good night, Nixon," said Mrs. Headley, quickly and much affected; "you are a noble fellow!" and she took and warmly pressed his hand.

"Oh! Mrs. Headley, that is the way Mrs. Ronayne pressed my hand after she had placed the packet in it, and obtained my assurance that her directions should be punctually obeyed. I shall ever feel that pressure—the look of kindness that accompanied it. I prayed inwardly to God, as I stood gazing on her while she rode gracefully away, to shower all His choicest blessings on her."

"Good Nixon, no more," and Mrs. Headley was in the next minute at the side of her husband, who, with deep care on his brow, sat at a table buried in papers, and with the despatch of General Hull in his hand.

"Well, my dear, have you seen him—ah! how does he bear his affliction?"

"Oh! Headley, I pity him from my inmost soul—pity him for what he now suffers; and, oh! how much more for the greater agony he has yet to endure!"

"You have not yet, then, told him?"

"No! Mrs. Elmsley and Von Voltenberg were there; and even the former must not know the secret. Let all mourn her as one lost to us for ever, but not through her own fault. Let them continue to believe that she has been violently torn from us, not that she has proved unfaithful to her husband, ungrateful to her friends."

"Think you not, Ellen, that it would be better to continue Ronayne in the same belief? As you have not opened the subject to him, it is not too late to alter your first intention."

"Dear Headley, Ronayne must know all. In no other way can the wound at his heart be healed. I comprehend his noble, generous character well. Such is his love for Maria, that he will never recover the shock of her loss while he believes her to have been unwillingly torn from him. He will pine until he sickens and dies, and, indeed, unless the whole truth be told to him, he will find some means of leaving the fort in search of her; indeed he has said he will—that nothing shall prevent him; and, alas, if he does, it will be

with her. He depends on to return without her. Now, I know that if his love be gone, his pride and proper self-esteem are not less so, and he is assured that however gentle his first wound, he will dry up the fountain of his heart from the moment that he learns that her love for himself has been transferred to another; that, carried away by a strange and seductive fascination, she has abandoned him for an uneducated boy. His pride, even if it do not make him forget her, will so balance with his now unrequited affection, as to enable him to bear himself up, until time shall have robbed the wound of all its bitterness, and nothing remain but the scar. You will, moreover, have an efficient officer preserved to you, and one whose services may be much required in the present crisis—whose voice in the council will not be without its weight, and whose arm and example will help to instil confidence in the men, with all of whom he is a marked favorite."

"You are right, Ellen, if all that you suppose be true; better that the wound should be enlarged to insure its speedier cure, than that the laceration, though less acute, should be continued. But is it not necessary to be well assured of this? Should you not have stronger ground than what you witnessed yesterday to justify the belief that this excursion was planned to insure the result that has followed?"

"Depend upon it, Headley, I will not do so, for you know I am not disposed to 'ought extenuate or ought set down in malice,' but I have already prepared Romney, indirectly, to expect some singular relation in which Maria is concerned. I wanted him to form some idea of the nature of the revelation I had to make, in order that the shock might not be so great, when I fully entered upon the subject. I had at first intended that he should come to me in the morning, but, on reflection, I thought it better that everything should be told to him to-night where he is, and the matter settled, on leaving, that I would return within an hour. Was I right, my love?" and she took and pressed his hand to her lips.

"Always right, dear Ellen—always considerate and prudent. Yes, poor fellow, it were cruel to let him slumber in hope, however faint, only to wake to confirmed despair in the morning. Besides there may be, most probably will be, a wild outbreak of his passionate grief; and that, manifested here where the servants cannot fail to hear him, may induce suspicions of the true cause that must never be entertained. No, whatever we know, however we may deplore the weakness—the infatuation of that once noble girl, within our own hearts must remain her unfortunate secret."

"Generously, nobly said, my husband. Were I not certain that it would destroy, wither up the very soul of Romney to keep him in uncertainty and ignorance, I could not rend the veil from before his eyes; but it must be so, even for his own future peace. Besides me, therefore, for he will know that I have entrusted you with the fact, none in the garrison will be aware of the truth, and Romney will at least not have to feel the mortification—the bitterness arising from the conviction that his wife is mourned by his comrades, with aught of diminution of that respect they had ever borne to her."

"How annoying is this occurrence at this particular moment," observed Captain Headley, musingly pressing his hand to his brow, "and how unfortunate. Had Winnebago brought General Hull's despatch one day sooner, all this would not have happened, for they never could have obtained per-

mission to leave the fort, much less to visit so dangerous a vicinity as Hardacreable. Our march from this would have changed the whole current of events.

"Even so," returned Mrs. Headley; "but here is a packet, left with Sergeant Nixon, which he has just handed to me, and which may throw some light on the subject. I will first glance over it myself."

She broke the seal—hurriedly read it—and then passed it to her husband, whose utter dismay, as he exchanged looks of deep and painful intelligence with her, after perusing the letter, was scarcely inferior to her own.

"This is evidence indeed!" he murmured. "Who could have expected it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

"Grief is proud, and makes its owner stout."—King John

It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when Mrs. Headley, wrapped in her husband's loose military cloak and forage cap, once more approached the apartment of Romayne, situated at the inner extremity of the low range of buildings inhabited by herself. This disguise had been assumed, not because she felt ashamed of the errand on which she was bound, but because she did not wish to provoke curiosity or remark, in the event of her encountering, while going or returning, any of the reliefs or patrols, which she knew orders had been given for the first time that night, to have changed every half hour. In the extreme darkness of the night, the difference of her height could scarcely be distinguished from that of her husband, and it was not likely that any one would address the supposed commanding officer, whom all would assume anxious in regard to the health of his subordinate, and on his way to ascertain the extent of his majesty.

The lights were turning dimly in the apartment. There was a window on each side of the door, and the farthest of these she fancied she saw shaded by a human form from without. She stopped suddenly, and kept her eyes riveted on the object, holding in her breath that she might not betray her presence. Presently the shadow was removed from the window, and lost altogether to her sight. A movement of the light now made within was reflected on the figure of Romayne, who, with a candle in his hand, seemed to be approaching the door. He was still dressed as he had thrown himself on his bed, on entering, in the deerskin hunting-frock he had worn during the day, and his temples were bound with a blue-bordered scarlet bundanna handkerchief—for he had ever loathed the abomination of a nightcap as being symbolical of the gibbet. As he came nearer to the window, the light which he bore reflected distinctly without and upon an Indian standing in the doorway, similarly habited, even to the very turban.

Mrs. Headley felt that she could not be mistaken in the figure, but if any doubt had existed, it would have been dissipated when involuntarily calling out, and in a tone meant to imitate the harsher voice of her husband,

the name of Wau-nan-gee, the face was wildly turned in the broad light to penetrate the darkness which half enshrouded her from view, and the features of the boy distinctly revealed. Surprised, but armed with strong resolution, she made a rapid forward movement to seize and detain him, knowing well that Ronayne, at the sound of voices, would come forth at once to her assistance; but the Indian, without uttering a sound, stole rapidly away towards the picketing in the distance, and was seen no more.

As Mrs. Headley now approached the door, it was opened by Ronayne, who apologised to her for not having sooner attended to her knock, but declared it to be so low that he had not distinctly heard it.

"Nay," she replied, when she had entered and taken a seat, "I did not knock, nor had I intended to knock; I have disturbed another midnight visitor."

"Another visitor! To whom do you allude, my dear Mrs. Headley? I must have deceived myself, or surely I heard, soon after I had risen from my couch, the name of Wau-nan-gee."

"You did not deceive yourself," she returned, gravely; "I saw Wau-nan-gee at the threshold of your door as plainly as I see you, and habited in the same manner. I called to him, but he fled."

"Impossible!" said the anxious officer; "wherefore should he flee after knocking for admission? What motive could he have in coming? and how could he obtain admission unperceived? I have no doubt that fatigue and excitement and the lateness of the hour have tended to call up this vision. Would that you could make it real."

"Ronayne," repeated Mrs. Headley, gravely, "you well know that I am not given much to imagine that which is not. Even to the very handkerchief you have on your head, his dress was identical, was Wau-nan-gee's; and I well recollect the occasion when, at the distribution of the annual presents to the Indians, you appropriated that handkerchief to yourself, because, as you said, Wau-nan-gee had manifested so much good taste in choosing one like it."

"But, my dear Mrs. Headley," returned the officer with civility, while, after closing the shutters, he took a seat at her side, "you must pardon me if the very fact of the resemblance in dress only increases my conviction of the illusion. In all probability, it was my shadow that you saw reflected by the strong light upon the glass upper half of the door."

"As you please, Ronayne; but, for my own part, I have not the slightest doubt on the subject. You ask how he could get here? Even, as you will remember, you once made an evasion from the fort—well intended, I grant, but still an evasion from the fort—over the picketing of the fort. But the matter would not be of so much consequence at any other time. At present, it is connected with much that I have to reveal; but how so connected, I cannot even fancy myself. Ronayne," she continued, taking his hand and pressing it in her own, "disabuse yourself of the idea that Wau-nan-gee, whatever he may have been, is now your friend."

"Wau-nan-gee not my friend?" returned the officer, sadly. "Well, I was prepared in some degree to hear the assertion, Mrs. Headley, our conversation an hour since being well calculated to make me revolve the subject in my mind during your short absence, and I have done so. When

you mentioned a moment ago that Wau-nan-gee had been at this door, seeking for admission, I felt confident that you had done him great wrong ; but now, I confess, since you so positively assert his presence and sudden evasion, I am led to apprehend, I know not what. Speak ; let me hear it all," he concluded, with bitterness.

"Ronayne, my almost son," she said, leaning her arm affectionately on his shoulder, "it was with the view that suspicion should be excited in your mind by my language that I stated what I did. I did not wish the truth to burst upon you with annihilating suddenness, and therefore sought to prepare you for the blow I am destined to inflict."

"And that is—" he said, with stern and furrowed brow, a pallid cheek, and compressed lip.

"Nay, Ronayne, I like not that tone and manner."

"Proceed, Mrs. Headley, pray proceed ; I am ready to hear all. Whence this sorrow so much keener than that I now endure, and how is it connected with Wau-nan-gee !"

"Has it never occurred to you to connect the one with the other?" she observed, in low and uncertain accents.

"Ha! is it that?" he exclaimed, vehemently starting and hurriedly pacing the apartment. "It is then even as your words had led me to infer. Still, I would not approach the subject myself. I waited for something more direct from your lips. You have uttered it, and I am now prepared to hear all. But, Mrs. Headley, mark me, be well assured of all you say ; let not mere appearances be the groundwork of your suspicions, or you destroy two generous hearts for ever ; but," he resumed more calmly, yet with a look of fierce determination, as he once more seated himself at her side, "although the love I bear Maria is deeper far than man ever bore for woman, assure me that it is not returned, that this soft-eyed boy, with Indian guile, has stolen the love in which I lived, and then I tear her from my heart for ever. Think me no mere pining fawnster, craving a love that is not freely given. As the passion that I feel is fire, hot as the Virginian sun that nurtured me, so will it become ice the moment it ceases to be fed by that which first enkindled it. Yes," he continued, bitterly, "I could tear my heart out if in its weakness it could pine for one, however once endeared, who had ceased to respond to all its devotedness and worship. I might think of her, but only to sustain my wounded spirit. Contempt and scorn for her fickleness, not love—base and grovelling love—should ever be associated with her image, when undesiredly it arose to my repelling memory. But oh, God!" he exclaimed, bowing his head upon hand, and yielding to his deep emotion, "is it possible that this can be! Can it be that I should ever speak and think of Maria thus! Oh, whence this too great affliction! why this separation of soul from soul! this rending asunder of the mystic bond that once united us! But stop!" and he raised his head, the hot and inflaming tears still gathering in his eyes, "she cannot surely thus have acted, and yet—and yet—oh! Mrs. Headley, if you knew the desolation of my heart, you would pity me. It is crushed, crushed!"

During this painful ebullition of contradictory feeling, in which pride and love combated fiercely for the ascendancy, Mrs. Headley had been deeply affected ; but feeling the necessity for going through the task she had imposed upon herself, she strove as much as possible to appear calm

and collected, even severe. His last appeal brought tears from her own eyes.

"Indeed, indeed, Ronayne," she exclaimed, pressing his hand fervently between her palms, "I do pity you, I do sympathize with you, even as a mother, in the desolation of your heavily-stricken heart. I had dreaded this emotion, and only my strong regard for yourself gave me strength to undertake the infliction of the counter wound, which I knew alone could preserve you from utter misery and despair; and yet, if you would cherish the illusion, if you would not that the stern reality should sear up each avenue to hope, to each sweeter recollection of the past, I will, if you desire it, abstain."

"Nay, not so, Mrs. Headley," replied the unhappy officer; "you are very cruel, but I know you mean it well; proceed—let me be told all. The stronger your recital, the more confirmatory of the utter destruction of my dreams of happiness, and the better for myself. I have already said that scorn and contempt alone can dwell in my heart, if that which I surmise you are about to relate be but found to be true. I am ready for the torture—begin!" and, as if with a dogged determination to hear, and suffer while he heard, he leaned his elbow on the back of his chair, and covered his eyes with his hand.

The recital need not be repeated here. All that had occurred on the preceding day, and that which is already known to the reader, Mrs. Headley now communicated, adding that she had been undecided in her opinion of the subject, until the answer to the question put to Von Voltenberg convinced her that the whole thing had been planned, and that she had willingly thrown herself into the power of Wau-nan-gee. The few guns, she concluded, were evidently a signal of which she availed herself by instantly galloping off, while Ronayne was yet at some distance from her, and unhorsed.

Prepared as the unhappy officer had been for intelligence involving this mysterious change of affection in his wife, he was utterly dismayed when Mrs. Headley recounted what she had witnessed in the summer-house, to which she had voluntarily gone, and from which she probably never would have returned had not accident disclosed the secret of the trap-door.

"This is, indeed, a terrible blow!" he said, solemnly, removing his hand and exhibiting a pale cheek and lip, and a stern and knitted brow; "but now I know the worst, I better can bear the infliction. Strange, I almost hate myself for it; but I feel my heart relieved. I know I am no longer cared for there, and wherefore seek to force an erring woman to my will? And yet, when I think of it, of the monstrous love that weds rich intellect and gorgeous beauty to the mere blushing bud of scarce conscious boyhood, I feel as one utterly bewildered. Still, again, since that love be hers, she may not control the passion that urges her to her fate, so unselfish am I in my feeling, even amid all the weight of my disappointment, that rather would I have her free and happy in the love she has exchanged, than know her pining in endless captivity, separated from and consumed with vain desire for a reunion with myself—her love for me unquenched and unquenchable."

"Ah! what a husband has she not lost! Generous, noble Ronayne, that is what I had expected. You bear this bravely; I knew you would,

or never should I have dared to enter upon the matter. But your generosity must go further; it must never be known that Maria has gone off willingly—no doubt must be entertained of her continued love for you. She must still be respected, even as she is pitied and deplored; the belief that she has been made captive and carried off must not be shaken."

"The struggle at her heart must indeed have been great before she fell," remarked Ronayne, musingly, and with an air of profound sadness; "for although her appearance in the rude vault beneath the floor of the summer-house would appear to indicate compulsion, her after conduct justifies not the belief. The imploring earnestness with which she entreated you, Mrs. Headley, not to make known what you had seen to me; her abstaining from all censure of Wau-nan-gee at the moment, and her subsequent interest in him, too forcible to be concealed; her strange and unaccountable manner during our ride, as if to banish some gnawing reproach at her heart; her galloping off when freed for the moment from my presence, and at the evident signal given to announce that everything was prepared for her reception; the appearance of her trunks in the farm-house, evidently, I am now convinced, taken there within a day or two; the pretended desire of the Indians, friends of Wau-nan-gee, to make me a prisoner, and thus induce in me the belief that such was her fate. Oh! yes," he continued, rising and pacing the room rapidly, "I can see through the whole plot. His party were Pottowatomies, painted as warriors of a distant tribe, that suspicion might be averted from themselves. Their object was not to make either Von Voltenberg or myself prisoners, but merely to give such evidence of hostility as to cause us to believe they were enemies. Oh, what sin, what artifice for a woman once so ingenious, a boy so young! But now I am assured of all this, I am better—I am better. Some sudden inspiration has flashed the truth upon me, that I might find that relief which a knowledge of her unfaithfulness alone can render me."

"It must have been even so," rejoined Mrs. Headley; "for, certainly, the fact of yourself and Von Voltenberg being allowed to escape by hostile Indians, who could so easily have shot you down, or taken you prisoners, had they been really so inclined, appears to me to be incredible."

"And yet, if it was planned," pursued Ronayne thoughtfully, "what opportunity of communication had they to arrange their measures? Wau-nan-gee has, we know, long been absent for weeks, or certainly not once within the fort."

"Ronayne," said Mrs. Headley, significantly, "I speak to you of these things freely as to one so much younger than myself. Have I not just said that I saw Wau-nan-gee most distinctly at your door as I entered—nobody but ourselves know that he has got in, much less in what manner."

"I understand you, my dear Mrs. Headley; you would infer that he has stolen in at some obscure part of the fort, and under cover of the darkness; but even if so, am I not always at home?"

"Never on guard, Ronayne; or am I mistaken," she added with a faint smile, "in supposing that the officer on duty passes the night with his men?"

"By heaven it is so," returned the Virginian vehemently, and striking his brow with his open palm, "this intimacy is of long standing. Though pretending absence, Wau-nan-gee has been ever present. My guard nights

have been selected for those interviews. The poison of his young love has been infused into the willing woman's ear and heart, and now that I recollect it, often on my return home have I seen her, pale, dejected, and full of thought—he has entreated her to fly with him—to suffer him to be the sole, the undivided sharer of her love—she has hesitated, struggled, and finally consented. By the same means by which his entrance has been effected, the trunks of Hardscrabble have been removed, and all was prepared for her evasion yesterday, had she not been baffled in her object by your sudden appearance. Oh, I see it all!”

CHAPTER IX.

“RONAYNE, Ronayne!” resumed Mrs. Headley, after the strong excitement of her feeling had been in some measure calmed, “how rapidly you arrive at conclusions. Much of what you say is probable—for your sake, I would it were all so, but let us be guided in our judgment by circumstances and facts alone. If it had at first been arranged that the plan adopted with such success to-day, why the visit to, and detention in, the vault of the summer-house where every preparation had been made for a long concealment?”

“That,” replied Ronayne, “is a mystery which time alone can unravel. I confess that it involves a contradiction susceptible of explanation only by themselves. This, in all human probability we shall never know; but then, again, forgive me, Mrs. Headley, for thus detaining you with any selfish interests, but your voice, your counsel, your very knowledge of the facts—all breathe peace to my wounded spirit; but, I ask again, why the scream she gave—why the emotion, the grief, she evinced when on opening the trap-door, you saw her reclining exhausted on that rude couch? I would reason the matter so as to convince myself *thoroughly* that her flight has been her own wilful act, for then I shall the less regret, even though I should not be able to banish her image wholly from my mind. You have said that you saw Wau-nan-gee leave the summer-house with an excitement in his eye and manner you had never witnessed before, and that this corresponded with the state in which you found Maria a few moments later. Now, is it probable that if she had purposed anything wrong she would have asked you to accompany her, or that she should have asked you to wait for her, while visiting a spot whence she knew she never would return? Oh, no! this could never be. Her mode of evasion, if such had been intended, would have been very different; she would have chosen a moment when you were in some distant part of the garden, and saw her not, to steal into the summer-house. All clue, then, would have been lost, and the appearance of the Indians lurking about the cottage would naturally have impressed you with the belief that she had been carried off by them. How were they dressed?”

“Even as you have described the party that pursued, or affected to pursue you yesterday,” exclaimed Mrs. Headley, “in the war paint of the Winnebagoes. I know it well, for their chiefs have often been in council here.”

“Just so,” pursued Ronayne. “Is it not then reasonable to suppose—

mark, I do not weakly seek to justify the wrong which but too certainly exists, but I would dissect each circumstance until the truth be known—is it not, I repeat, reasonable to suppose that, even if Maria wanted an evidence of her abduction, she would have gone towards the cottage rather than the summer-house. It would have been easy enough then for the Indians who, I have no doubt, were the same party I encountered at Hardscabble, to have carried her off before any assistance could arrive from the fort. On the contrary, she was certain of discovery in the summer-house into which she had been seen to enter, and every part of which she would have known would have been most strictly searched. Wherefore, too, the object in keeping her confined, as it were, in a dungeon, when the free air was open to her, and the boundless wilderness offered health and freedom?"

"I have thought of all that, Ronayne," replied Mrs. Headley, "and I cannot but suppose that this retreat was a temporary one. In all probability, when Wau-nan-gee issued from the summer-house, he was in the act of proceeding to make his preparations for finishing the work just begun, but seeing that I had not yet left the grounds, waited to know what my movements would be before he took any farther step. My stationing the boat's crew before the gate, where they could command the whole of the view between the cottage and the summer-house, acted as a check upon them, and little dreaming, I presume, that I had discovered the trap-door, they had intended, on my departure across the river, to avail themselves of my absence, and bear her off into the forest. As for the deep grief which I witnessed on entering the summer-house, that may easily be accounted for. A woman of refinement, education, and generous susceptibility however unhappily carried away she may be by a resistless, and, in her view, fated passion, does not without a pang tear herself from old associations to enter upon new, especially where they are of an inferior character. She may mourn her weakness even at the moment she most yields to it. One dominant thought may fill her soul—one master sentiment influence all her actions, and govern the pulsations of her heart, but that does not exclude the workings of other and nobler emotions of the mind. Even when she feels herself most tyrannized over by the passion, the infatuation, the destiny against which she finds it vain to struggle, sorrow for her altered position will intrude itself, and then is her heart strengthened and her mind consoled only by the reflection that the sacrifice was indispensable to the attainment of that, without which, in the strong excitement of her imagination, she deems life valueless. Charity should induce us to believe that it is, what I have already termed it, a disease, for on no other principle can we account for that aberration of the passions, the intellect and the judgment which can lead such a woman to forget that mind chiefly gives value to love, and to sacrifice all that is esteemed most honorable in the sex by man, to the fascination of mere animal beauty. Ah! Ronayne, this must have been the case in the present instance. You see, I probe you deeply—but enough!"

"Dear Mrs. Headley," returned the Virginian, pressing her hands warmly in his own, "I am satisfied that, humiliating as it is to admit the correctness of your impression, there is but too much reason to think that it is even as you say. When I recur to the past of yesterday and to-day, I cannot doubt it; and yet I confess there is much buried in obscurity which I would fain have explained. Were it made clear, manifest as the handwriting on the

wall, that Maria had abandoned me for Wau-nan-gee, I should be at ease. It is the uncertainty only that now racks my mind. Could I *know*, not merely *believe* her false, a weight would be taken from my heart. Oh! Mrs. Headley, why did you not suffer Wau-nan-gee to enter—why drive from me the only means of explanation at which I can ever arrive—and, yet, what could have been his object in thus venturing here after having despoiled my home of its treasure? If guilty, would he have dared to approach me? and that he might not do so with evil intent, is evident from the fact of his having knocked for admission. Oh! Mrs. Headley, I know not what to think—my mind is chaos—I am a very changeling in my mood: not from want of energy to act when once assured, but from the very doubts that agitate my mind, made wavering by the absence of all certain proof."

While the soul of the unfortunate young officer was thus a prey to every shade of doubt, and manifesting the very weakness that his lips denied, Mrs. Headley regarded him with deep concern. She could well divine all that was passing in his heart, and the chord of her sympathy was keenly touched. For some moments she did not speak, but appeared to be lost in her own painful reflections. At length, when Ronayne, who during these remarks had been rapidly pacing the room, threw himself into a chair, burying his face in his hands, evidently ill at ease, she drew forth her packet, the seal of which was broken, and handed it to him, saying with sadness—

"My dear Ronayne, I had hoped that I should not have been under the necessity of making known to you the contents of this note, but I see it cannot be withheld. It was placed in my hands, just after I had parted with Mrs. Elmsley, by Serjeant Nixon, who stated that Maria had left it with him for me, as she rode out this morning, telling him it was of the utmost importance that he should deliver it."

"I saw her in conversation with him," said Ronayne, as he took the note and approached the light to read it, "and on asking what detained her, she said, hastily, that she was merely sending you a message—not a document of the importance which you seem to attach to this. I felt at the time that she was not dealing seriously with me; but as it seemed a matter of little consequence I did not pay much attention to it; but, let me read!"

The following were the contents of the note, which Ronayne eagerly perused, with what profound emotion it need scarcely be necessary to describe:

"My dear Mrs. Headley: When you receive this, you will have seen me, perhaps, for the last time; but I am sure that you will believe that, in tearing myself from the scene where so many happy, though not altogether unchequered days have been passed, no one occupies a deeper place in my regret than yourself, whom I have ever regarded as a second mother. The dreadful reasons which exist for it, however, prevent me, as a wife, from acting otherwise. I know you will condemn me—tax me with ingratitude and selfishness. I am prepared for reproach; but, alas! no other course remains for me to pursue. If I have yielded to the persuasions of the gentle, the affectionate, the devoted Wau-nan-gee, it is not so much on my own account as in consideration of the hope held out to me of a long future of happiness with the object of my heart's worship. For him I can, and do make every sacrifice, even to the incurring of your displeasure, and the

condemnation of all who know me. But let me entreat you to remember, that if he is seemingly guilty, I alone am truly so, and chargeable for the deep offence that will of course be attributed to him. Remember that I have planned the whole; and should it be decreed by fate that we never meet again, I pray God in his infinite goodness to preserve those whom I now abandon, and spare them the distraction that weighs upon this severely-tried heart.

"I promised you a candid explanation of everything relating to what you saw yesterday. This you will find fully detailed in the accompanying document, written after you had left me, and before the return of Ronayne last night from fishing.

"Document! what document?" asked the Virginian, interrupting himself, and in a voice husky from emotion; "there is nothing here, Mrs. Headley, but the letter itself."

"Nothing but that and the piece of embroidery which Maria had worked for me were contained in the packet," was the reply. "In her hurry she must have forgotten to inclose it."

"In the accompanying document (resumed the Virginian, reading) you will find the nature of my connexion with Wau-nan-gee fully explained. You will, of course, make such use of all that is necessary to your purpose as you may deem advisable; but, as I make that part of the communication which refers to Wau-nan-gee strictly confidential, I conjure you never, in the slightest way, to allude to him as being connected either with my evasion or with the revelation I have made to you in the inclosure. Adieu, my dear Mrs. Headley. God grant we may meet again!

"Your own

MARIA."

During the perusal of this note, Mrs. Headley had watched the countenance of Ronayne with much anxiety. She saw there evidence of strong and varied feelings which he made an effort to subdue, and so far succeeded that when he had finished he returned the note to her with a calm she had not expected.

"There is no need of further confirmation now, Mrs. Headley," he said, with a bitter half-smile. "You have, indeed, probed but to heal. All my weakness is past. To-morrow I shall be myself again, and attend the council. Pardon me that I have been the cause of detaining you so late, and believe me when I say that deeply do I thank you for the interest you have taken in me."

"God bless you, Ronayne! Alas, you are not alone in your trials—much of moment awaits us all. Good night!"

And, assuming her disguise, she speedily regained her home.

CHAPTER X.

"Nader may he live to see a sunshine day that cries—Retire, when Warwick bids him stay."—*Henry IV.*

On the western bank of the south side of the Chicago River, and opposite to Fort Dearborn, stood the only building which, with the exception of the cottage of Mr. Heywood on the opposite shore, and already alluded to, could at all come under the classification of a dwelling-house. The owner of this mansion, as it was generally called, which rose near the junction of the river with Lake Michigan, was a gentleman whom and the Pottowatomie Indians in particular, a good understanding had always existed. Several voyageurs, consisting of French Canadians and half-breeds, constituted his establishment, and in the course of his speculations, chiefly in furs, with the several tribes, he had amassed considerable wealth. He was, in fact, the only person of any standing or education outside the wall of the fort itself, and of course the only civilian, besides Mr. Heywood—whom, however, they far less frequently saw—the officers of the garrison could associate with. His house was the abode of hospitality, and as, in his trading capacity, he had opportunities of procuring many even of the luxuries of life from Detroit and Buffalo, which were not within the reach of the inmates of the fort, much of the monotony which would have attached to a society purely military, however gifted or sufficient to their mutual happiness, was thus avoided. His library was ample, and there was scarcely an author of celebrity (the world was not overrun with them in those days), either historian, essayist, or novelist, whose works were not to be found on the shelves of his massive black walnut bookcase, made by the hands of his own people from the most gigantic trees of that genus that could be found in Illinois. He had, moreover, for the amusement of the officers of the little garrison, prepared a billiard room, where many a rainy hour was passed, when the sports of the chase and of the prairie were shut out to them, and for those who asked not for either of these amusements, there was a tastefully, but not ostentatiously, furnished drawing-room, with one of the best pianos made in those days, which he had had imported at a great expense from the capital of the western world, and at which his amiable and only daughter generally presided.

Margaret McKenzie had been born at Chicago, but having lost her mother at an early age, her father, profiting by one of his periodical visits to New York, had taken her with him for the purpose of receiving such an education as would enable her not only to grace a drawing-room, and make her a companion to a man of sense and refinement, but to fit her for those more domestic duties which the uncertain character of so secluded a life might occasionally render necessary, and where luxury and education alone were insufficient to a trading husband's views of happiness. After five years' absence, she had returned to Chicago, a girl of strong mind, warm affection, without the slightest affectation, and altogether so adapted in manner and education—for she eminently combined the useful with the ornamental—that her father was delighted with her, not less for the proficiency she had

nothing all that gives value to society, but because of the utter absence of all sense of regret in abandoning the gay and enlivening scenes of the fascinating capital, in which she had spent so many years, for the still, dull monotony of the primeval forest in which her childhood had been passed.

But here she was not doomed to "waste her sweetness on the desert air." There were only two officers in the garrison, besides Captain Headley, when Miss McKenzie returned to her native wilds—Doctor Von Voltenberg and Lieut. Elmsley. The third who made up the number of those attached to the company had a few days previously been shot and scalped by a party of Indians near Hardscrabble, while on his return to the fort from shooting the hen, or English grouse, of the prairie. His place was supplied by Ensign Romayne, who had joined the garrison a few days after. Lieutenant Elmsley, captivated by the accomplishments and amiability of the fascinating Margaret, had offered her his heart and hand, and obtained her reluctant promise speedily to share his barrack room, some twenty feet by twelve in dimensions. Meanwhile, in order to prove to him how well she was fitted to be a soldier's wife, not an article of food was ever placed before her father's almost constant visitors that did not in some measure pass under her supervision. Poor would have been the preparation of the grosser viands had not her directing voice presided; and, as for the tarts, and puddings, and custards, *et hoc genus omne*, no one who tasted could doubt that no hands but her own had operated in the fabrication; and the currant, the cranberry, the strawberry jelly, the peach, the plum, and the cherry preserve, and the currant and gooseberry wine! What, in the name of all that is delicate in gastronomy, could be more delicious or exhibit greater perfection of taste! So thought Von Voltenberg. He was in raptures. Such a wife, he thought, was all he wanted to his comfort; he could have dispensed, if necessary, with the more intellectual portions of the worth of Margaret McKenzie, but his imagination could not picture to itself perfection superior to that of an interesting and beautiful woman, manipulating among fruit, and sugar, and dough, until she had produced results far sweeter and much more prized by him than all the ornamental accomplishments in the world. It was even whispered that the Doctor, deeply sensible of the treasure he should obtain in the possession of so generally useful a wife, had absolutely proposed for her, but that she, without offending him, had rejected the honor. Whether it was so or not, no one knew positively, for Margaret McKenzie was not a woman to triumph in the humiliation of another, not because she considered it in any way a humiliation to a man that he did not so accord in sentiment with her as to render an union for life with him desirable, but because she knew it would, however absurdly, draw upon him the ill-natured comments of his companions. Be that as it may, whether or not he did offer and was rejected, it made no difference in his relations with the family. He ate her dinner, luxuriated over her preserves, and sipped her wine as plentifully as when first she had offered them to him; and they always were the best friends in the world.

Soon after the first rumor of Von Voltenberg's offer—and if the secret was betrayed, it must have been by himself, during one of his moments of devotion to his favorite whiskey punch—it was generally known throughout the fort and neighborhood that Lieutenant Elmsley was to espouse Miss McKenzie, and that the ceremony was only delayed until the arrival of his

head and shoulders companion, Eliza Ronayne, who, at present, seemed the object so constantly sought and sought, as has been stated, was almost daily expected. At length he came, and soon afterwards Captain Headley, married them, Ronayne assisting as groomsmen, and Mrs. Ronayne—then Miss Howard—as bridesmaid. This was two years previous to the marriage of the Virginian himself, and the occasion on which he first met her whom he subsequently so fervently adored.

It was no privation to Mrs. Elmsley to forsake the almost luxurious ease of her father's house for the more sober accommodation of her husband's barrack-rooms. True, these were comfortably furnished, but still they had that primness which belongs ever to the quarters of a soldier; but from the moment of casting her destiny, she had determined in every sense to be a soldier's wife, and to inure herself from the first to the plainness incident to the condition. All she had transferred to the fort was her music and her books; and if at any moment caprice or inclination led her to desire a change, it was but to get up a little party, such as their limited social circle would permit, and transfer the amusements of the day to her father's more inviting mansion, where the servants had from herself learned all the art of management. Lively in disposition in the extreme, Mrs. Elmsley loved to promote the comfort of others; and as her husband possessed an equally happy temperament, they contributed not a little to enliven the circle of which, in point of quiety, they might be said to be the centre.

The owner of the establishment himself—Mr. McKenzie—was fond of good living, and having arrived at an age when continued prosperity permitted a relaxation from the toils of the earlier and cooler portions of the day, loved to indulge after dinner in a large arm-chair, placed in a veranda that overlooked the fort and country around, and where the light air from the lake, waving through the branches of the thin trees, swept with refreshing coolness along the broad corridor. He generously smoked the fragrant herbs of the Indians, mixed with tobacco, and sipped the delicious clarets with which his cellar was stocked, and which he kept, not for sale or barter, but for the exclusive use of himself and friends.

Immediately after Winnebago had left Captain Headley, he made his way to the mansion of Mr. McKenzie, whom he found, as usual, sitting in his veranda, enjoying his pipe and wine after dinner. The greeting was that of old friends long separated. They had known each other from their youth; and, while the Indian entertained the highest respect for the character and opinions of Mr. McKenzie, the latter in turn reposed the most unbounded confidence in the sincerity and integrity of the chief.

"Well, Winnebago, my old friend, where do you come from? Where have you been all this time? I thought you had deserted us altogether. But I recollect now: Captain Headley sent you with dispatches to Detroit. What news do you bring back? But first try a glass of claret. Harry"—calling out to a son of one of his voyageurs, who acted in his household in the capacity of his private servant—"bring another chair and a wine-glass."

"Yes, come from Detroit, Missa Kenzie," replied the Indian gravely, as he seated himself, took his tomahawk from his side, filled it, and began to smoke; "bring him bad news for you—for all."

"How is this, Winnebeg?" exclaimed his listener, putting down the glass which he had raised to his lips. "What bad news do you mean?"

"Leave him all dis," he observed, as he swept his hand towards the fort and the outhouses and buildings containing Mr. McKenzie's property—the profits of a long life passed in a region to which he had become attached from very habit.

"Leave what! my property? I do not understand you, Winnebeg; speak out! What are you driving at, man? What necessity is there for all this?"

"English fight him Yankee now—big war begun. By by English come, take him Chicago!"

"The war begun!" said Mr. McKenzie, rising in astonishment from his seat; "do you mean to say, Winnebeg, that the English and Americans are actually at war? that they have been fighting at Detroit? How do you know it?"

"How him know it?" returned the chief; "look here, Winnebeg fight him English," and baring his thigh, just below the left hip, he showed the scar of a superficial flesh wound still encrusted with blood.

"Where did you get that, Winnebeg, and how long since?"

"Two week," he replied, holding up as many fingers, "near Canard Bridge, close to Malden, Canada—General Hull angry—say Winnebeg no business fight—carry him despatches."

"General Hull! How long has General Hull been there? Where, then, is Colonel Miller, of the fourth regiment, who commanded the other day?"

"Colonel Miller Detroit too; but Hull big officer—great chief—come with plenty rogues—send Winnebeg with despatch to Gubbenor here."

"Indeed! This is important; I must hasten to see Captain Headley, and learn from him the contents. Alas! my good friend Winnebeg, this news may, and I fear will, be the cause of my utter ruin. Of course, you have no idea of what the despatch contains?"

"Yes, Missa Kenzie, Winnebeg know. Winnebeg wish to speak to you about despatch—say go directly to Fort Wayne."

"The troops ordered to Fort Wayne, and all we possess left wholly unprotected. This is indeed a calamity," said the trader, raising his hand to his now thoughtful brow.

"You no take him goods on pack-horses to Fort Wayne!" remarked the Indian inquiringly.

"Impossible, Winnebeg! I might take a few packages of peltries, but the great bulk must be left behind, yet it seems to me folly to go to Fort Wayne. We shall be cut off before we get there."

"Just so," returned Winnebeg. "See him Gubbenor, Missa McKenzie; tell him not go. Stay here—fort strong—plenty powder—plenty guns—you tell him so."

"Most assuredly I will; and if he adopts the most prudent course, he will remain. With your strong force without and ours within, we may have a fair chance with any force that may be brought against us, whereas heaven only knows what may not be the result if we attempt so long a march through the wilderness, alive with Indians in the interest of the British. Good by, Winnebeg; you will excuse me, I am sure, for there must be no

time lost in consulting with Captain Headley. Make yourself at home, and call out to Harry for anything you may want. That claret will not hurt you after your long journey; it is pleasant to the taste, and not very strong."

"Tankee, Massa Kenzie; Winnebago go to Pottowattomie camp—not been dere yet. Gubbenor say no tell him Ingin war begun till hold council to-morrow. Winnebago sure him know it free, four days."

"Why, do you think that, Winnebago, since there has been no intelligence of the kind since your arrival?"

"See him plenty Pottowattomie here in Detroit while Winnebago wait for despatches."

"Indeed; but they may not have returned."

"Don't know—maybe no, maybe yes."

"Well, to-morrow the matter will be no secret, Winnebago; and some decision will no doubt be added. In the meantime, you will be able to learn whether anything is known in the encampment of this unwelcome news, and, if so, what your people think of it."

"Kenzie," said the chief, taking and warmly grasping the trader's hand, "all Pottowattomies tink like Winnebago—no go to Fort Wayne."

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN Mr. McKenzie entered the fort, it was with a clouded brow and an oppressed heart. At the gate he met his son-in-law, Lieutenant Elmsley, who, while burning with impatience to be near and console his unfortunate friend, was without the power to leave his post, and in his vexation and annoyance, kept pacing rapidly up and down in front of the guard-house.

"What is the matter, Elmsley—what disturbs you so unusually?"

"Can you ask, sir," said the officer, "or have you not heard the dreadful news?"

"Yes, I have heard it, but did not suppose it had as yet been generally known."

"The whole garrison knows it. It could not be concealed. The poor fellow rushed like a madman to announce it. He fell fainting to the ground, and was carried to his room, where, even at this moment, Mrs. Headley and Margaret are attending him."

"Attending whom?" demanded Mr. McKenzie with an air of astonishment, "and to what are you alluding?"

"Why, Ronayne, of course; to whom do you allude if not to him? Have you not heard that, while riding out with his wife and Von Voltenberg this afternoon, they were intercepted by a party of hostile Indians, and poor Maria taken prisoner?"

"God bless my soul, is it possible? This is terrible, indeed. Are we then already surrounded by hostile Indians, and is the war already brought to our door?"

"War! what war?" asked the subaltern, "and what has this fearful piece of treachery to do with open war—war with whom?"

"And have you not heard that England and the United States are openly engaged in hostilities—has Winneberg not revealed this?"

"Not a word," replied Lieutenant Elmsley, astonished, in his turn, at the information.

"At another moment, and on an entirely different occasion, this mutual misapprehension made a full room for pleasantry," continued Mr. McKenzie with a grave smile; "but it is not so. Winneberg, I see, has been true to his trust; and, although confident of the nature of the despatches, revealed the information to no one but myself, whom he regarded as having not only a right to possess it at the earliest moment, but as being the most proper person to advise with the commanding officer, at the earliest moment, on the measures to be adopted. I am here for that purpose; think you I had find him alone, for I wouldn't enter upon the subject before Mrs. Headley."

"I have just said that Mrs. Headley and Margaret are in attendance on the unfortunate Romanyn," replied Elmsley. "You will, therefore, be sure to find them at me, and no doubt have some influence in the formation of plans of operation consequent on this intelligence."

"Recollect, not a word of this need it be officially revealed. I shall not even let Captain Headley know it. I am aware of the facts, but simply state that, having heard he was in the receipt of despatches, I had come to know if there was any news of importance. But, of one thing I would warn you, Elmsley; there will be a council of war to-morrow, and I could wish that your view of the subject may lead you to prefer defending the fort to the last extremity in preference to a long and uncertain retreat to Fort Wayne, which I know is suggested in the despatch."

"I shall have no difficulty in arriving at that decision," returned the officer of the guard, "for common sense only is necessary to show the advantages of one course over the other. In the meantime, I shall evince no knowledge of what you have conveyed to me, until the hour of council. But no other consideration weigh with me, I would oppose a movement which cuts us off from all hope of recovering the dear lost wife of Romanyn to her distracted husband."

"Good bye, God bless you," answered the trader, as he moved towards the quarters of Captain Headley.

"Then," mused Elmsley, when alone, "are the forebodings of that fusty old member of the National Intelligence which I have thumbed for hours over and over again for the last three months, at length finally realized—and war is come at last; well, best so! My chief anxiety is for Margaret. Would that she and all the rest of the weak women in this fortress were safe within the fortifications of Detroit; but all evil seems to be coming upon us at once."

"Ah! Mr. McKenzie, I am very glad to see you," said Captain Headley, rising as the trader entered the room set apart for his library and the transaction of military official business. "Take a seat. You could not have paid me a more opportune visit."

"I had understood that Winneberg had just returned with despatches from Detroit," remarked the trader, "and am come to learn the news."

"Bad enough," answered Capt. Headley, gravely, as he handed to him the despatch from General Hull. "Read that!"

Mr. McKenzie attentively perused the document. It was evidently of ..

nature not to please him, for as he read he knit his brow, bit his lip, and uttered more than one ejaculatory "pish!"

"And what do you intend to do, Captain Headley?" he demanded, as he twisted the paper in his fingers impatiently.

"Stay, my dear sir," said the commanding officer, anxiously, "do not thus disfigure or slight the general's official—I must preserve it as the only voucher for the course I shall in all probability pursue."

"What is that course?" asked Mr. McKenzie; "surely, Captain Headley, you will not strictly follow the letter of these instructions? You are not compelled to do so. It is left optional with yourself; and there can not be a question as to the great disadvantage attending a retreat."

"Pardon me," said the commanding officer, with something of the hauteur of one sensible of his own personal responsibility; "I consider every paragraph in this official as a direct order. The only sentence that would appeal to leave a certain option with myself is where reference is made to the *practicability* of retreat. Now, I can see nothing impracticable in it. We have nothing to apprehend, with a body of five hundred brave Pottowattomies for our escort, while, if we continue here we must expect a strong British force speedily upon us."

"Let me give you a word of counsel before this question is publicly discussed," returned the trader seriously; "I know the Indians well, and how easily they are influenced by circumstances. Friendly as these Pottowattomies now seem to be, the influence of the majority of the tribes who have joined the British forces may soon change them from friends into foes."

"My life on their fidelity," returned Captain Headley, with unusual energy. "While Winnebago continues with them, I feel that I should dishonor by doubting him."

"Do not mistake me," returned the trader. "Your faith in the honesty of Winnebago, Capt. Headley, is not greater than my own—nay, not so great, perhaps, for I have known and always regarded him from his boyhood; but all the Pottowattomies are not Winnebagoes, neither are the warriors so completely under the control of their chiefs as to permit their counsels alone to influence their actions."

"You do not mean to say that you have reason to doubt any of these people, Mr. McKenzie?" remarked the captain, seriously and inquiringly.

"Not at all; but I wish to show how much more imprudent it would be to trust to them than to ourselves; reinforcements may arrive in time if they are sent for immediately, and should they not, it will be time enough to think of evacuating when our Indian spies bring us notice of the preparations of the British to attack us."

"And should they arrive before our retreat is begun, then must we be driven into an unequal contest, for the order of the secretary at war expressly declares that no post shall be surrendered without a battle. It is evident that the fort cannot be maintained against a regular force; therefore, the garrison, or they who survive the assault, must be made prisoners in any case; whereas, by retiring now, we not only prevent the advance of the enemy, to the manifest ruin of yourself and other settlers in the neighborhood, but carry succor to Fort Wayne. This is the resolution I have taken. After first consulting with my officers on public parade in the morning, when our

position shall be fully made known to all, I shall meet the Indians in council. The necessary directions have been conveyed to Winnebeg."

"I can only regret, sir," returned Mr. McKenzie, with great gravity of speech and deportment, "that your determination should have been formed before consulting with your officers. In a case of this kind, involving the interests of all, it becomes, I should conceive, not a mere courtesy but a duty, that the opinions and advice of all competent to judge should be taken."

"You need not be alarmed, Mr. McKenzie; I perfectly know how to act on this occasion. The opinions of my officers shall be taken, even as I have taken yours. If you have anything further to offer, therefore, I shall be happy to hear it."

"Captain Headley," returned the trader, rising with dignity, and taking up his hat, "I have nothing further of advice to offer to one so confident in his own judgment; but bear in mind what I now tell you, that if you follow the letter of these instructions rather than the spirit, you will have cause to repent it. I make not this remark from mere considerations of my own personal interests, which, of course, will be greatly affected by this abandonment of the post, but because I sincerely believe that a defence will entail less disaster than a march through the vast wilderness we shall have to traverse, hampered as we shall be with women, less able to bear up against fatigue, privation, and disaster. As the Indian orators say, 'I have spoken!' and now, sir, I have the honor of wishing you a very good day."

"Well, what says he—what does he intend?" asked Lieutenant Elmsley, who was lingering near the gate, waiting for the return of his father-in-law.

"He is an obstinate, conceited ramrod," returned the latter, peevishly; "but you will know all to-morrow, for he really intends to do you the honor to consult you in the morning."

"But what is his decision? You have not said."

"To give up everything to the Indians, and retreat forthwith."

"Can it be possible?" exclaimed the officer, perfectly indignant at the communication.

"Even so. Alas, for the poor women, and the ladies particularly! what a march for them; but I go, meanwhile, to 'set my house in order.' Well, Elmsley, all I had garnered up through a quarter of a century of incessant toil, as a heritage for you and yours, will, I fear, be utterly lost."

"God bless you," said the officer, grasping his hand, "think not of that. There are far weightier considerations at stake than those of a merely pecuniary nature. The lesson Margaret has taught herself—to be contented to live on a soldier's pay—will not have altogether been thrown away upon her. The loss of her fortune is the least calamity to be dreaded."

"Nobly said, Elmsley. Well are you worthy of her!" He warmly shook the hand that still lingered in his own, and then turned the angle of the gateway leading down to his own dwelling.

CHAPTER XII.

"For we to-morrow hold divided council."—*Richard III.*

On the following morning there was unusual commotion in the fort, and, notwithstanding the great sultriness of the weather, both officers and men appeared in the full costume of the regiment from an early hour. The bright and silken flag, worked by the hands of Mrs. Ronayne, had been hoisted by Corporal Nixon's own hands, for he knew that not a man of the garrison would look upon it without vividly interesting himself in the fate of her who had worked it, and desiring to be a volunteer of the party he fully expected would be sent out that morning to attempt her rescue. Already had he decided on five of the number who, besides himself, would be selected by Ronayne on the occasion, and these were Collins, Phillips, Weston, Green, and Watson. He knew that an early parade had been ordered by Captain Headley, and as this was a rare occurrence, he could assign no other cause for it than the desire the commanding officer entertained to send off the little expedition as speedily as possible.

Precisely at eight o'clock the roll of the drum brought forth from their respective barrack rooms some sixty men, composing the strength of the little fort, with the exception of the invalids and convalescents, some fifteen in number. But even of these, such as could find strength to drag themselves, came forth and lingered in the rear of the slowly forming little line, while women and children gathered in groups near the guard-house, anxious to see who would be the fortunate ones selected for the recovery of the much-loved wife of their favorite.

A few moments later, and the officers were seen approaching from their several quarters to join the parade. Captain Headley, dressed in his newest uniform, was the first on the ground; then came the Doctor, then Elmsley, for, on that occasion, the guard at the gate had been left without an officer; and lastly, much to the surprise of all, Ronayne. As he approached, all eyes were fixed upon him, and every breast acknowledged a sympathy in the pallor of his now unmoved brow, that in more than one instance moulded itself into a tear it was impossible to suppress. As for the women, they held their aprons to their eyes and wept outright. On gaining his company, the Virginian touched his cap as usual to the commander of the parade, and, passing close by Elmsley, whose eyes he saw riveted upon him with much interest, he significantly grasped his hand.

"Mr. Elmsley," ordered the commandant, "let the company be wheeled inwards, to form a hollow square."

The order was promptly obeyed, and within the square stood the little group of officers.

"Gentlemen and men!" began Captain Headley, as he unfolded a despatch, "it is on no common occasion that we find ourselves assembled this morning."

Every eye was again turned upon Ronayne. The looks of the men seemed to say, "We know it, and we are prepared to do our utmost to repair the evil."

"There is not a man of us, your honor," said Corporal Collins, "who is

not ready to volunteer to go out and recover Mrs. Ronayne, or die in the attempt. You have but to say the word."

"Silence, sir! How dare you presume to speak in the ranks! Corporal Collins, from this day you lose your stripes,—a fit example, truly, for a non-commissioned officer to set to the men. Mr. Elmsley, you will see to this."

The lieutenant gravely touched his hat, but replied not.

"It is not for this purpose that I have assembled you," resumed Captain Headley. "Much as is to be deplored the unfortunate occurrence of yesterday, matters of deeper importance must engage our attention now."

Many of the men shrugged their shoulders, and looked their discontent. They could not imagine what he meant, or what could be of more importance to them than the recovery of the lost lady.

The parade was once more called to attention, when Captain Headley proceeded to read to them the document that has been so often before the reader.

"You see, gentlemen and men," he continued, when he had finished the perusal, "how intricate is our position, and how little choice there is left to us to decide in the matter. It must be but mere form to ask your opinions on the subject, for the directions of the General are so positive that our duty is implicitly to follow them. Mr. Elmsley, as the oldest officer, what is your opinion?"

All had heard with the greatest surprise the unexpected communication, but there were few who were of the opinion of their commander, that their safety would be best insured by a retreat. The men, of course, were not expected to have a voice in the consultation, but it was desirable that they should hear what their respective officers had to say, and therefore the subject had been opened to the latter in their presence.

"My opinion, Captain Headley," returned his lieutenant, "can be of little weight in a matter which you appear to have decided already; however, as it is asked in presence of the whole garrison, in presence of the whole garrison will I give it. On no account should we retire from this post. Our force, it is true, is small, but we have stout hearts and willing hands, and, with four good bastions to protect our flanks of defence, we may make a better resistance than it appears they have done at Mackinaw, should the British deem it worth their while to come so far out of their way to attack us. My own impression is that they will not, for there is nothing to be gained by the conquest of a post which commands no channel of communication, and therefore offers no advantage to compensate for the sacrifice of life necessary to take it. Certainly, nothing will be attempted unless Detroit itself should fall. The British forces will have too much to occupy them there to think of weakening by dividing the troops they have in that quarter. On the other hand, should we undertake a protracted march to Fort Wayne, encumbered as we are with women, and children, and invalids, there is but too great reason to infer that parties of British Indians, apprised of our march, will hasten to the attack, and then our position in the heart of the woods will be hopeless indeed. These, sir, are my views on the subject, nor can I conceive how a man of common discernment can entertain any other."

"Mr. Elmsley, I merely asked you, in courtesy, to pronounce your own

opinion, not indirectly to pass censure on those of your superiors. I have stated not only my opinion, but my decision. Even were I desirous to remain I could not, for our provisions are nearly consumed."

"Why, captain," said Phillips, speaking from his place in the ranks, "I know that we have cattle enough to last the troops six months."

"Who speaks? Who dares to question my assertion?" thundered Capt. Headley. "We may have cattle enough," he added, in a milder tone, feeling that some explanation was due to the men generally, "but we are deficient in salt to cure the meat when killed."

"A sheer pretence!" muttered another voice not far from Phillips; "where there is a will, there is a way."

"Who spoke?" demanded Captain Headley, angrily.

"I did, sir," answered Collins; "you have taken the stripes from me, you can do no more."

"Drummers, into the square!" ordered the captain. "Gentlemen, before we proceed further in this matter, this man must be tried for insubordination—a drum head court martial immediately. Sergeant Nixon, go to the orderly's room and bring the articles of war."

"Nay, Captain Headley," interposed the sergeant, "poor Collins!"

"What, sir! do you, too, disobey?"

"No, sir," returned the non-commissioned officer, respectfully, "but I thought when brave men would so soon be wanted for the defence of those colors, your honor could not be serious in your threat to score their backs; and a braver and a better soldier than Corporal Collins is nowhere to be found in the American ranks. He is excited, sir, by the loss of Mrs. —."

"Stay, Nixon," interrupted Ensign Ronayne, "not another word. Captain Headley," he resumed, sternly, turning round to his commandant, "if Corporal Collins is punished, you will have to punish me also, for I swear that he but a hand laid upon him, and I will incur such guilt of insubordination as must compel you to place me under arrest. This severity, sir, at such a moment, is misplaced, and not to be borne."

"Mr. Ronayne, depend upon it, this conduct on your part shall not pass unnoticed. When the proper time arrives, expect to be put upon your trial for this most unofficer-like interference with my authority. At present, I can ill afford to spare your services, and placing you in arrest now would only be to affect the interests of my command. When we reach Fort Wayne, you may rely upon a proper representation of your behavior. Private Collins, retire to your place in the ranks."

"Reach Fort Wayne!" returned the Virginian, emphatically. "Mark me, sir, we shall never reach Fort Wayne. Captain Headley," he continued, more calmly, "look at those colors; do you not think we shall find more spirit to defend them while floating there (and he pointed to them), calling upon us, as it were, to remember the day when first they were unfurled before the British Lion, than when carrying them off encased and strapped with the old kettles and pans of the company upon some raw-boned old pack-horse, as if ashamed to show themselves to an enemy."

"And those colors especially," ventured Sergeant Nixon, emboldened by the warm language in his defence used by the high-spirited young officer. "They are the same worked by the hands of Mrs. Ronayne, and run up

there on the day of her own marriage, on the fourth of July. I hoisted them with my own hands this morning, because I believed we were going out to the rescue of that dear lady, and, in my mind, I can only say that it would be much easier to send out half the force for her, with a few Indians for scouts to point out where the red devils are, and then, when we have got her safe, to return here and defend the place, or perish under the ruins."

"God bless her!" exclaimed nearly half the men, turning their eyes towards the rustling flag, which a slight and rising breeze now displayed in all its graceful beauty of color and proportion. "Sure enough she worked it, and we are ready to die under the same, if she only be here to see us."

"God bless her!" repeated the women in the distance. "If our prayers could be of any use, our husbands should run all risk from the Indians, so that we might see her sweet face again. Oh, let them go, captain!"

Despite all the determination he had formed, Ronayne could not stand this new feature in the scene unmoved. He drew his handkerchief hastily from the bosom of his uniform, and carried it to his eyes. The recollection of the fourth of July, so recently passed, came with irresistible force upon his memory, and even while his own heart was made more desolate, this universal manifestation of the regard in which his wife was held affected him deeply.

"Nay, Mr. Ronayne, rather than exhibit this emotion before the men, had you not better retire?" remarked Captain Headley, in a low tone; "their excitement, too, will the sooner subside when you are gone."

"Sir, if you assume a weakness in me," returned the officer, haughtily, as he removed the handkerchief from his eyes, "you are wrong. I came here not to advert to the past, but to do my duty. I confess I am touched by the honest and noble feeling of my comrades, but nothing more. No entreaty of mine will be urged in support of their prayer. I am prepared to sink my individual loss in consideration of the general danger."

All the men were taken by surprise. They had wondered from the first at seeing Ronayne come upon parade, with a manner so different from that which he had shown on the preceding evening; but they had taken it for granted that he knew of an intended sortie, and, relying on its successful issue, was only waiting for the order from Captain Headley.

A loud shout was now heard from the common, and presently one of the two sentinels that had been stationed at the gate walked quickly up with his firelock at the ready, and reported to Captain Headley that the Indians were mustering strongly about their encampment, and seemingly more painted than usual.

"This is as it should be," replied the commanding officer. "The day of council should be a gala day, whatever the occasion, and doubtless they are making preparations accordingly. It is well, however, that I have changed the hour of our consultation from twelve to eight. We have now more leisure for our own preparations."

"And these are, Captain Headley, permit me to ask?" remarked Mr. McKenzie, who had stood at some distance from the parade, without interfering with the preceding discussion.

"To distribute, sir, as directed, the stores belonging to the United States,

then dismantle the fort, and depart at once for Fort Wayne. These noble and faithful Pottowatomies, who are now assembling for the council, will bear us bravely through."

One or two shots were now heard from the gate. The men were startled: still more so when they heard a loud mocking laugh succeed to the report. Several of them turned their heads and looked around. They saw that the flag, the wheeling and tossing, as if indignant at the outrage, had been cut by a bullet. The Indians had never before attempted this."

"That, sir, is the work of your friendly Pottowatomies," remarked Ronayne, with a sneer; "their friendship is truly very remarkable at this particular moment. They show their regard for us by insulting the American flag in a way in which they never did before."

"March off your guard immediately, Mr. Elmsley; let the sentries be posted, and all remain armed until further orders; yet mark, both officers and men, no distrust must be openly shown. Do not let it appear that the inconsiderate act of one or two young men has raised your unfounded and ungenerous suspicions of a whole tribe. It is not that I have any doubt as to their truth, but my policy has ever been to show them we are never unprepared for an emergency. Corporal Collins, you will resume your stripes."

In obedience to his order, the guard was relieved at the gate, and the whole of the men made to linger about the parade, preparatory to the hour of council.

CHAPTER XIII.

While Lieutenant Elmsley was occupied as acting adjutant—a duty which he was called upon to perform, as well as that of regimental subaltern—Ronayne sauntered mechanically towards the gate. Notwithstanding the seeming indifference he had at first manifested in regard to the absence of his wife, there were few among the men who, whatever their surprise at his language, were not afterwards made sensible that he was profoundly affected; and as he somewhat sternly passed each soldier on his way, they silently and with unusual deference—a deference that indicated their own strong sympathy—touched their caps to him. Arrived at the gate, he looked long and anxiously, almost incessantly, even as one without an object, toward Hardscrabble, the forest road to which was dotted, here and there, with occasional openings, enabling the eye to distinguish the serpentine course of the silver river. All around and before him were the lounging Indians to whom allusion has just been made. There appeared to be unusual excitement in their manner, and groups of the younger warriors particularly were to be seen in animated conversation. He was about to retire from the gate and join Lieutenant Elmsley, who had now nearly finished distributing his guard, but anxious to take one last look of the neighborhood of Hardscrabble, his eyes suddenly fell upon the outline of a horse just emerging from a wooded part of the road upon the plain, and partially concealed by the figure of an Indian that stood at the side of the

horse. He looked again—the distance was too great to enable him to judge distinctly, but he felt convinced the rider was a woman. There was a telescope kept in the bastion near the flag-staff, for the use principally of the officer of the guard. He walked rapidly to this, and drew the instrument to its proper focus, but when he looked in the direction in which he had before gazed nothing was to be seen. Vexed and annoyed beyond all measure, he descended again rapidly to the gate, but with no better success. He could not doubt that it was his wife whom he had seen, yet unwilling to breathe the knowledge even to himself, his heart was a prey to the most contradictory feelings. In a few moments, however, the horse he had before remarked again appeared emerging from the same point of road, but this time he no longer carried a woman but a warrior, so that all means of identifying the former were denied to him. But still there was evidence sufficient. The horse was evidently Maria's, though with its tail twisted and plaited as for disguise; and as Ronayne with the glass brought fully to bear upon him, saw the rider throw over his shoulders and fasten round his neck, a blanket, and place on his head a colored calico turban, such as was in common use among the Pottowatomies, he felt satisfied that it was the same youth who, in the disguise of a Miami, had pressed him so closely in the chase of the preceding day.

Strange to say, he entertained no feeling of enmity towards the youth, even when he turned away with feelings of mingled bitterness and mortification, and silently ascended the bastion to replace the glass. Never was his mind more unsettled—never had he entertained so perfect a sentiment of indifference for everything around him. It was very well to talk of pride, and acorn, and fortitude, but existence to him had become a dull weight, a rayless future, and nothing would have pleased him better at that moment, than the sudden announcement of a British force being at hand. In the stirring excitement of action only could he hope to find distraction, and the ball aimed at his heart, the sword pointed to his throat, he would have scarcely deemed it worth his while to seek to turn aside. The roar of artillery and of musquetry would, he felt, be music to his ears, provided it shut out from memory the recollection of what had been. But the idea of a long and monotonous march to Fort Wayne, even provided it should be effected without interruption, bringing with it at each moment recollections of the past was a horror not to be endured; and he determined, by every means in his power, to oppose the resolution of the commanding officer to the uttermost. He was already under the ban of one threatened court-martial, and it mattered little to him what steps Captain Headley might adopt in regard to him for the future.

He had passed some moments in these reflections—fitful, varied, and broken as those of a disconnected dream—when turning his eyes again towards the gate where the sentinels had been posted, he saw one of them bring his musket to the charge as if to prevent the ingress of some one seeking admittance. Struck by the circumstance, Ronayne hastened below, and as he advanced he saw the same sentinel pick up a piece of paper, the superscription of which he was endeavoring to examine. Before he had time to do this, however, the officer had come up, and the sentinel promptly handed it to him.

"Good God! what does this mean?" It was the handwriting of his wife.

Ronayne looked forward upon the common, and saw at about a hundred yards before him, and retiring rapidly, the horseman whom he had just before remarked. There was no necessity for asking any questions. The whole thing explained itself.

"What can she have to say to me?" he mused to himself, as he broke the bark string with which the note was tied; his competitor of yesterday, too, the bearer! Hastily he unfolded it. It contained these few words, hastily written in pencil on a leaf torn from her memorandum book—"Go not to the council!" He examined the paper closely—he could find no more.

The feelings of Ronayne, on reading these few words, traced by his wife's well-remembered hand, may be comprehended. All the stubbornness of his indifference was shaken; and sinking every consideration of self he found a strange, wild pleasure in the knowledge that she was free from personal restraint, and had power to command the services of those whom she willed to do her bidding. What the meaning of the caution was, in regard to the council, he could not divine, neither wherefore it had been couched in such laconic terms; but it was evident that, as the new wife of Wau-nan-gee, she had obtained information of some danger of which they in the garrison knew not, and that the recollection of those she had left behind was not so weakened as to prevent her from imparting to those most interested what she had learned.

Feeling the necessity of communicating instantly with Elmsley on the subject, yet scarcely knowing how, without exposing Maria, to account to him for the manner in which he had received the singular warning, he sought his friend, who had now finally disposed of his men at their several posts, and told him that, without feeling himself at liberty to reveal to him the medium through which the suspicion had been awakened in his breast, he had every reason to believe that some treachery was intended at the council called by Headley, and that he had come to consult with him accordingly.

With infinite good taste and tact, Elmsley utterly abstained from making the slightest allusion to Mrs. Ronayne, not only because he had perceived that her husband did not seem to encourage any approach to a subject which gave him pain, but because he felt that the consolation of those words, on an occasion of such bereavement, was rather a mockery than a sympathy. Without, therefore, making the slightest allusion to the past, he answered gravely—

"If you have reason to apprehend this, Ronayne, we can take our precautions accordingly. As the whole object and intent of the council is to *seem* to hold a consultation as to the course we ought to pursue in this emergency, whereas it is simply in fact to enable Headley, who is becoming stubborn and pompous as of old, to tell the chiefs that he intends at once to distribute the public stores among themselves and warriors, and then march with little more than the men can carry on their backs; as this only, I repeat, is his object in holding a council at all, I see no great reason why either you or I, who have already given our opinions on the matter, should attend it. We may do the 'state some service' by remaining within."

"Would it not be well," returned the Virginian thoughtfully, "to give Headley some hint of false dealing on the part of the Pottowatomies? not

such as to lead him to believe that any direct intelligence has been received of that fact, but simply that some loose hints have been thrown out."

"My dear fellow," returned the lieutenant, with a faint smile, "do you think there is anything under the sun—scarcely even the tomahawk in his own brain—that could persuade Headley to mistrust his pet Pottowatomies? No, not even his long experience of the treachery of the race—not all his knowledge of the fickleness of their character—of the facility with which they turn over in a single day from the American to the British flag—would convince him."

"And yet," pursued Ronayne, musingly, "they know nothing of the war. What could be their motives, where their immediate interests will be rather retarded than promoted by the maintenance of peaceful relations?"

"How do we know what passes without the fort? They may have had their runners and news brought to them of the war before Winnebago returned."

A sudden thought flashed across the brain of Ronayne. Could tidings of the event in any way be connected with the flight of his wife? and had that, at the instigation of Wau-nan-gee, accelerated the moment of her departure? But Elmsley knew not what *he* knew, and he offered no remark on the subject.

"It wants now an hour," resumed Lieutenant Elmsley, looking at his watch, "to the time named for the council which is to be held on the glacis immediately in front of the southern bastion, and, therefore, immediately under the flag. Join me here then, Ronayne, and I shall have made the necessary arrangements. All the responsibility I take upon myself, my friend, not only as your senior, but as one who is perfectly willing to take the lion's share of the anger that has been showered so plentifully upon both this day. Now I must hasten and regulate the '*imperium in imperio*,' for I am afraid that if, as you say, we trust alone to Headley's reading of Pottowatomie faith, we shall have rather a Flemish account of satisfaction to render to ourselves. Good bye. In half an hour—not later."

Ronayne, having nothing in the meantime to do, sauntered towards his own apartments. When he entered his chamber, Catharine, the faithful servant of his wife, was leaning along the foot of the bed, her face buried in the covering and sobbing violently. The depth of her sorrow was anguish to him. He shuffled his feet along the floor to make her sensible of his presence. The girl heard him; she looked up—her face and eyes were so swollen with tears that she could scarcely see. She started to her feet, and raising her apron with both hands to her eyes, left the room sobbing even more violently than before.

"Poor girl—poor girl!" murmured Ronayne, while a tear forced itself into his own; "indeed I feel for your grief; but it will soon subside; you will soon be well, while I —"

He threw himself, dressed as he was, even without removing his sword, upon the bed—he took out Maria's hasty note—he read the words "Go not to the council" at least fifty times over. There was not the minutest particle of each letter of each word that he did not typify in his heart. Her delicate and expressive, yet faithless hand had traced the whole. It was enough. It was the last relic of herself.

CHAPTER XIV.

I would have some conference with you that concerns you nearly

Which A. L. About Nothing.

When Ronayne rejoined his friend, all the preparations he intended making had been completed, and Mrs. Elmsley having despatched a servant to say that breakfast was waiting for them, the latter, after leaving stationed Corporal Collins at the gate to give early notice of the approach of the Indians, linked his arm in that of Ronayne, and conducted him to his rooms.

It was, of course, the first time the Virginian had seen Mrs. Elmsley since the preceding evening, when, with Mrs. Hendley, she had been a pained witness of the desolating grief she so deeply shared herself. The swollen eyelid and the pale cheek attested that little sleep had visited her eyes during the subsequent part of the night; and when she affectionately took the proffered hand of Ronayne, whose composure she was greatly surprised and pleased to witness, there was a melancholy expression of sympathy in her glance that tried all the powers of self-possession of the latter.

How different was that breakfast table from what it had been on former occasions! How often, both before and after their marriage, had Ronayne and his wife partaken of the hospitable board, with hearts light as gratified love could render them, and exhilarated by the witty sallies of the amiable hostess, who, full of life and gaiety herself, sought ever to render her more sedate friend as exuberant in spirit as herself. How graceful the manner in which she recommended her exquisitely made coffee, her deliciously-dried bear and venison hams, the luxuriously-flavored and slightly-smoked white fish from the Superior and the Sault; and with what art she allured the appetite from one delicacy to another, until scarcely an article of food at her table was left untasted. And yet all this, not in a spirit of ostentatious display of her own aptitude in these somewhat sensual enjoyments, but from a desire, by the exercise of those little niceties of attention which insensibly win upon the heart, to please, to gratify—to make sensible that she sought to please and to gratify—those whom both herself and her husband so deeply regarded.

The breakfast was now a hurried one. It had not been prepared with the usual care. The directing hand of the mistress seemed not to be visible—it was heavy as the hearts of those who now partook of it, and even the never-failing claret, of which Elmsley compelled his friend to swallow several goblets, had lost more than half its power to exhilarate; for, oh! there was one of that once happy party gone for ever from their sight, and the solemn and restrained manner of each was sufficient evidence of the deep void her absence had created.

It was a relief to all when Corporal Collins hurriedly appeared at the door and announced that the greater portion of the warriors of the Pottowatomies, with Winnebago at their head, were now advancing towards the glacier, where a large awning, open at the sides, had been erected soon after the morning's parade.

"Winnebago at their head, did you say, Collins?"

"Yes, sir, Winnebago, and with him—for I know them as well—Wau-ban-sag, Black Partridge, To-poo-ne-bee, Koo-po-rah, and that tall, scowling chief that never looks friendly, Pee-to-tum. They are all in their war dresses, and their young men as well."

"I am glad, at least, Winnebago is with them," remarked Elmsley to his friend. "Whatever may be purposed by the others, neither he nor Black Partridge can have any knowledge of it. This Sergeant Nixon had cut throes pounder run up into the upper floor of the block-house, Collins."

"They are at work at it now," I expect it will be all ready by the time your honor gets there, Mr. Elmsley."

"You are on guard at the gate?"

"I have been where you posted me, sir."

"Good! Is Captain Hendley gone out yet?"

"Not yet, your honor. I saw him, as I came along, go towards Doctor Von Voltenberg's rooms."

"We had better wait then, Ronayne, until he goes forth to assemble the council; otherwise he may interfere and play the devil with us all, by countermanding my arrangements."

"And do you really mean to say that you would permit him to do so, Elmsley? I am sure I would not; for, if ever disobedience to orders could be justified it is on this occasion."

"I do not exactly say that I would, Ronayne; but it is just as well to avoid clashing if possible. I confess I am no particular advocate, where the thing can be avoided, of wilfully and deliberately thwarting the authority of a commanding officer. But once he is out of the fort I shall be in command."

Another non-commissioned officer entered. It was Weston, who, that morning, had been promoted to the dignity of lance corporal, and the commanding officer's immediate orderly.

"Lieutenant Elmsley, the captain desires me to say that he is waiting for you and Mr. Ronayne to accompany the doctor and himself to the council."

"Then," said the subaltern addressed, "you will give my compliments, Weston, to Captain Hendley, and say to him that both Mr. Ronayne and myself decline attending that council—that we do not think it prudent to leave the fort without an officer, and that we conceive that having given our opinions on the matter for which the council is called, we can be of much more service here than there. Now mind, Weston, you will deliver this message respectfully, and in a manner befitting a soldier to his superior."

"Certainly, sir," replied the corporal, as he touched his cap and withdrew.

"You will have a visit from himself next, Elmsley," remarked his wife. "But why refuse to attend the council? There is no enemy near us, and surely half an hour's absence on the glacis cannot much endanger the safety of the garrison, surrounded as we are by friendly Indians."

"Margaret, my love," said her husband, taking her hand affectionately, "we must trust nothing to chance. No one can tell what may not occur in the interim of our absence. Who, for instance, could have foretold yesterday morning that we should be as we are to-day?"

"True," said Ronayne, as he paced the room with sudden and bitter

A moment, only, could have told yesterday that we should be as we are to-day. There is nothing certain in life—no instance of a family.

The painful change of feeling and of manner, from the self-control so recently imposed upon himself, had not been without its cause. The tenderness of his friends brought back to his memory the real life of many an hour of happiness passed in that room, when the same manifestations of affection had been exhibited in presence of the wife. But where was she now—where was his own share in that happiness which, for the first time, he almost half envied in his friend!

The door was again opened, and in walked not Captain Headley but Mr. McKenzie; his brow was overcast, and there was evidently deep care on his mind; but after tenderly embracing his daughter, he remarked to the officers, "I am glad you have come to the decision of not leaving the fort. I met Headley going out, and he is very angry. He has made me promise, however, to follow him in a few moments. I should have gone at once, but I could not resist the twofold temptation of pressing this dear girl to my heart, and telling you both how much I approve your prudence. For once you and Headley seem to have exchanged characters."

"No doubt," returned Elmsley, smiling, "that if we ever get to Fort Wayne, both Ronayne and myself will be hanged, drawn, and quartered by sentence of a court-martial, as a just punishment for our most glaring disobedience of orders here; but that will not be worse than being scalped here for obeying them; besides, there is this advantage attending the first—we shall have a little longer lease of life. But seriously, sir, there is now no time to lose. The moment you are out of the gates, I shall cause them to be fastened until the council is over. I have had cause for entertaining some little suspicion of your friends the Pottowatomies—may be, seeing that the trader looked surprised, 'there is no time to enter into explanation now. Later, I will state to you.'"

"I have no doubt you have been correctly informed," replied Mr. McKenzie, as, after throwing his arm around the waist of his daughter, he replaced his hat and prepared to depart. "Trent as is the confidence I have in Winnebago and the majority of the chiefs, I confess there has been a boldness—an almost insolence—perceptible in the behavior of many of the young men, seemingly urged on by Pee-to-tum, that I neither understand nor approve; but, as you say, there is no time to lose. God bless you, Margaret!"

When he had passed the gates, to which he had been accompanied by his son-in-law and Ronayne. Serjeant Nixon, who, as previously instructed, stood near for the purpose, fastened the bars and turned the lock. What men could be spared for the purpose were divided between the two subalterns. The one took his post in the upper floor of the block-house nearest to and overlooking the glacis; the other ascending the south bastion, manned two of the guns—the burning matches of both being concealed.

Not less than four hundred warriors could have followed their leaders to this council. The chiefs had already assembled and taken their places under the awning, while a little above them sat Captain Headley, the Doctor, and Mr. McKenzie; when the great mass moved towards the glacis. All were habited in half war dress, if the term may be permitted, and a formidable number separated from the main body and drew near to the gate. This, much to their surprise, was in the very act of being closed as they appeared

before. Much dissatisfaction was expressed in guttural sounds and exclamations. And one young Indian, more daring than the rest, struck his tomahawk down into the door. No notice was taken of this at first: but finding that the Indians persevered in their clamor and demand for admittance, Ronayne, who was in the block-house, ordered the three-pounder to be fired over their heads. This at once had the effect of dispersing and driving them towards the glacis, which they now tumultuously crowded, speaking loudly and angrily to the chiefs, who interrupted at the very opening of the council, yet not more surprised than the two officers were on hearing the gun, had started to their feet and turned their eyes towards the fort—the flashing light of the torches being now distinctly visible.

There being no repetition, however, of the report, Captain Headley, who had been questioned by the chiefs as to the cause, explained the discharge by attributing it to accident, or an intention on the part of Lieutenant Elmsley to compliment the opening of the council. But though he stated this, he did not himself believe that either was the reason, for he was well aware that no piece of ordnance had been in the block-house early that morning, and consequently, that it must have been placed there from some vague idea of danger connected with his officers' refusal to attend the council. He had observed, with some anxiety, the gathering of the Indians around the gate, and without being able to understand its exact character, entertained a vague impression that some danger was impending, yet by a strange contradiction, not at all uncommon, was more than ever annoyed with Elmsley for manifesting thus openly and markedly the distrust he entertained of their allies.

In an increased desire for conciliation he now resumed the council. The chiefs were duly informed, through Winnebeg, that war had been declared between Great Britain and the United States: that the American general commanding on the frontier had sent orders to evacuate the fort immediately, and make the best of their way to Fort Wayne, under the escort of the Pottowatomies then present: but that, before the march commenced, he (Captain Headley) was, in order to show the friendship of the United States, to distribute among the chiefs and warriors in the neighborhood all the property of the government in equal shares—"not only all stores of clothing and implements of the chase shall be divided among you," he concluded, "but the provisions and ammunition, which latter we have in abundance. All we ask in return is safe escort to Fort Wayne."

No sooner was this last announcement made when the glacis was filled with triumphant yells from the warriors. The chiefs themselves, with the exception of Pee-to-tum, whose cry had been the signal for their clamor, preserved a dignified silence. The eyes of Mr. McKenzie and Winnebeg sought each other, and there was a pained expression of disappointment in both that revealed at once the cause of their concern. The former bit his lip and muttered, as he turned away from the Indian to Captain Headley, the word "fool."

"Sir, did you speak?" asked the latter, half coloring as he fancied he had caught the word.

"I have said and think, Captain Headley, that in this last act of folly—the promise of ammunition to the Indians—you have signed our death-warrant. No one acquainted with Indian character can misunderstand the

feeling which pervades, not the chiefs but the warriors. If anything were wanting to satisfy me it would be found in the yell of satisfaction with which that promise was received. They are too drunk with hope even to stop to inquire. Tecumseh's emissaries have been among them. British influence has been at work ; but we will talk of this later. The chiefs seem surprised at this discourse between ourselves."

"Gubbernor," said Winnebeg, solemnly, and in his own broken English phrasology, "as the head chief of the Pottowatomies, I return thanks to our Great Father for the liberal presents he has made to our nation ; but I think it will be better not to go away or give up the ammunition, because we have plenty of everything to defend the fort for a long time. Give my warriors blankets and cloths, and the squaws trinkets, and keep the powder safe here. We can kill the cattle and make pemmican. If a force comes to attack you, we can attack them from the woods and the sand-hills. This, gubbernor, is what I have to say."

"And I," remarked Pee-to-tum, starting to his feet and with fierce gesticulation, "insist, in the name of the warriors, that the wishes of our Great Father of the United States be done. He has said we shall have the powder, and we will have it—and the rum, and Kenzie's strong drinks, too. Father, I have spoken."

Another loud and triumphant yell from the warriors grouped around too clearly evinced that there was danger to be apprehended from those they had hitherto looked upon as their friends. Captain Headley felt ill at ease, for he was conscious that he had irrevocably committed himself ; and, what was more mortifying to his pride, he was compelled inwardly to admit that his subalterns, although at the price of disobedience of orders, had, in this instance, evinced far more judgment and prudence than himself. Still the pride of superiority—mayhap of vanity—was in some measure deprived of its humiliation, as he consoled himself with the reflection that their precaution must have been the result of an intimation of some change of feeling on the part of the warriors, whereas he himself had been left wholly in ignorance on the subject, and led to repose confidently on their good faith. Still he shuddered as he thought of those within, at what might have been the turbulence of the young men, evidently encouraged by the dark Pee-to-tum, had they gained admission into the fort.

Feeling that things had arrived at a crisis, and that it would not be prudent to provoke those in whose power they now unquestionably were, he remarked calmly to Winnebeg that the word of the Father of the United States was pledged, could not be withdrawn without dishonor, and that, therefore, his resolution was unchanged in regard to the distribution of the powder with the other presents, which should take place on that very spot on the morrow.

Winnebeg looked angrily round as the yell of Pee-to-tum marked the triumph and satisfaction of the latter at this renewal of the promise of Captain Headley. It was uttered, not in gladness for the gifts, but as though it would express the knowledge that the donation was compelled—not to be avoided. Mr. McKenzie had difficulty in restraining the nervousness of his annoyance.

"Then, sir," he said, addressing the commanding officer, "since we are to assist in cutting our own throats, it seems to me that the most prudent

course to pursue will be to leave everything standing as it is, and allow the Indians to help themselves, while we march as rapidly as possible to our destination."

"What! and without escort? That, indeed, would be madness," exclaimed Captain Headley.

"It is from the escort we have most reason to apprehend danger," returned the trader. "What say you, Winnebago?"

"Winnebago say, suppose him Gubbernor not stay fight him English—go directly. Leave him Ingin here divide him presents."

Black Partridge and all the other chiefs, except Pee-to-tum, gave the same opinion.

Whether nettled at the support given to the proposition of Mr. McKenzie by Winnebago, or more immediately influenced by his strict sense of obedience to the order he had received from General Hull, or by both motives, Captain Headley firmly repeated his determination to distribute everything, as he pleased, on the following day. The hour of twelve was named, and the council broke up, the younger Indians leaping and shouting with joy as they separated in small parties, some yet lingering about the fort and glacis, but the main body moving off again to their encampment.

CHAPTER XV.

The remainder of the day passed heavily and gloomily. All felt there was a crisis at hand, and the insolent tone which the younger Indians had assumed, left little hope with any that the escort of their allies on the long and dreary route on which they were about to enter would bring with it anything but despair and disaster.

Captain Headley had exerted his prerogative. He had, as commanding officer, decided upon his course in opposition to the judgment even of his Indian counsellors; but he was not happy—he was not satisfied himself. On re-entering the fort, after the council had been broken up, he had felt it necessary to the maintenance of his own dignity to summon the subalterns before him, and read, or rather commence to read to them, a lecture on their disobedience of his command to them to follow him to the council; but, with strong evidence of contempt in their manner, they had turned on their heels and walked away without replying, leaving him deeply mortified at a want of respect for him, which was rendered the more bitter to his pride by a certain latent consciousness that it had not been wholly unwarranted. On entering his apartment, he found his noble wife preparing at her leisure the private arrangements for departure, and calm and collected as if no circumstances of more than ordinary interest were agitating the general mind. He caught her in his arms; he sat upon the sofa, and drew her passionately to his heart. Never in the course of twenty years' marriage had he more fondly loved her. There was a luxury of endearment in that embrace that renewed all the earlier and more vivid recollection of their union, and for many minutes they remained thus, each wishing it could last for ever. When this full outpouring of their souls had subsided, their

hearts beat lighter, felt freer, and there was less scruple in entering on the subject of the immediate future that awaited them.

While they thus sat conversing in a strain of confidence and tenderness, which the immediate trials to which they were about to be exposed rendered more exquisitely keen, Mr. McKenzie and Winnebeg entered unannounced. At the sight of Captain Headley, hand in hand with his wife, who sat upon his knee, the former would have retired, but Mrs. Headley, without at all displacing herself or affecting a confusion she did not feel, begged him to remain, adding that, as she supposed Winnebeg and himself had important business with Captain Headley, she would retire into the adjoining room.

She rose slowly and majestically, bowed gracefully to the trader, and took the hand of the chief, who as heartily returned the warm pressure she gave it.

"God bless him squaw!" he said, feelingly; "Winnebeg always love him. Lay down life for him."

"Thank you, good Winnebeg," returned Mrs. Headley, warmly, while a faint smile played upon her features; "I am sure you would do that, but let us hope it will never come to the trial."

"I hope so," returned the chief, as he shook his head gravely, and followed with a mournful glance the receding form of the noble-minded woman.

"Captain Headley," remarked Mr. McKenzie with severity, when the door was closed on her, "I am come to use strong language to you, but the occasion justifies it. If you do not rescind your promise of powder to the Indians, the blood of your wife, of my daughter—of every woman and child—of every individual in the garrison, be upon your head! Sir, you will be a murderer, and without the poor excuse of even being compelled to pursue the course you have. Was it not enough to promise them the public stores, without exciting their cupidity still further? Did you not hear the insolent Pec-to-tum declare that not only he would have all the ardent spirit as well, and not merely that, but what was contained in my cellar? When men—and Indians, in particular—use such language, do you think it prudent to put the means of our certain destruction in their hands? Do you think it likely that, when once they have drained to repletion of the maddening liquor, they will hesitate as to the manner of disposing of the powder so recklessly, nay, so guiltily, given to them? No, sir; let those articles be theirs, and we are lost, irrevocably lost! Speak, Winnebeg—you hear—you understand all I say—am I right?"

"Yes, Kenzie right," returned the chief: "sorry give him powder—young warrior not obey Winnebeg—Pec-to-tum bad man—make him wicked—no give him powder, Gubb-rnor!"

All the extent of the indiscretion of which he had been guilty now, for the first time, occurred to Captain Headley, and he could not but agree with the trader, that the results he foretold were those the most likely to follow the distribution.

"But how am I to act?" he returned (his pride causing him to reply rather to Winnebeg than to Mr. McKenzie); "how can I retract the promise I have so solemnly made without incurring the very danger you seem to apprehend? It will never do. Pec-to-tum will then sow disunion between us and our allies, and then where will be our expected escort?"

"Captain Headley, are you wilfully blind that you do not perceive you have lost all power, all influence to command where most you seem so much to rely? Why, sir, it is clear that they are only waiting for the delivery of the presents to throw off the mask. Better would it have been had you allowed them to gut the fort and choose for themselves. In their eagerness for plunder, they would have lingered at least a couple of days behind, thus enabling you to effect your march without them. Better that, I say, than the suicidal course you have adopted; but far better still it were had you boldly resolved to defend the post to the last. Your daring and your determination would have awed the Indians. Your present evident weakness and vacillation but inspire contempt."

"Mr. McKenzie," said the captain, rising with strong indignation in his manner, "this language I may not, will not hear with impunity."

"Nay," continued the trader, "you shall hear, for I have a right to speak. By your conduct, all are imperilled. For the men it were not so bad; but the women! Indeed, no language can be too strong to express the dangers you have drawn around us all. Have you no thought of your own noble wife?"

The door opened, and Mrs. Headley stood once more before them, calm and composed, but with a countenance slightly flushed.

"Headley—Mr. McKenzie, excuse my intrusion, but I could not avoid overhearing this unpleasant argument, which can tend to no benefit in our strong emergency. Think me not bold if I intrude in this matter, and, as a woman who has passed not a few summers of existence in these wilds, offer my opinion. With you, Mr. McKenzie, I perfectly agree that it would be highly imprudent, in the present changed state of feeling of the Pottowatomies generally, to supply them with ammunition which may be used against ourselves, and, with Captain Headley on the other hand, deem that it would be impolitic to exasperate the young men by denying that which they now so confidently expect."

"And how, dear Ellen, would you solve the difficulty?" asked her husband, smiling.

Mr. McKenzie spoke not; but his eyes were bent upon her with mingled surprise, respect, and admiration.

"You may keep the word of promise to the ear, but break it to the hope," she replied. "Did you not say you had appointed to-morrow for the delivery of the presents?"

"I did. To-morrow at twelve. Everything will then be handed over."

"Then," resumed Mrs. Headley, "what more simple than to produce, among the other parcels, a single cask of powder and another of rum; and if asked why there is not more, to offer in excuse that you had not known your supply was so low. No doubt, Pee-to-tum and those who, with himself, are discontented, will express disappointment, even indignation; but that is a very secondary consideration, when we consider the importance of withholding the gift. One cask of powder and one of rum divided among four hundred warriors will not amount to much after all."

"All very well, Ellen; but what is to prevent them, if they fancy themselves duped, from forcing the store and discovering the deceit that has been practised? Then, indeed, will they have some just ground for their fury."

"I have provided against that," she replied. "I mean that Winnebeg shall call a council of his young men this night at twelve, so as to keep them away from the fort that they may not know what is going on; then, when all is still, the whole of the men can be employed in removing the casks of powder and liquor, rolling them some into the sallyport, and emptying their contents into the well, which you know is built there as a reservoir in the event of a siege; the remainder, conveyed through the northern gate, the heads knocked in, and the contents thrown into the river. If they should search, they will find nothing."

"Good!" said Winnebeg, who perfectly understood the proposition, and had listened to every word.

"Indeed, indeed, Mrs. Headley," remarked the trader, "who will not admit that there is more resource on an emergency in a woman's mind than in all our boasted wisdom put together? A better plan could not have been devised. You will adopt it, Captain Headley?"

"Most certainly," he said, fervently grasping the hand of his wife. "When did my Ellen ever fail to better my judgment by her sound advice?"

"And yet, but for our little misunderstanding, Captain Headley—a misunderstanding not personal, but simply of opinion—we should never have had the advantage of her most wise umpire. This is certainly an illustration that good sometimes comes of evil."

"And now, gentlemen," said Mrs. Headley, playfully, "that I have conferred upon you the benefit of that wisdom you seem so properly to appreciate, I will again leave you to yourselves."

"God bless him!" said Winnebeg, as he took the hand that was again proffered to him in the most friendly manner.

"My ammunition and liquors must be destroyed in the same manner," said the trader, who now rose to take his leave. "Only three or four of my voyageurs are at home just now. You will allow some of your own men to assist them, Captain Headley."

"The moment the public stores are destroyed, they shall all do so," replied the captain; "the work cannot be too speedily done. Think you, Winnebeg, you can keep your young men in the encampment to-night?"

"Try him Gubbernor—call him council—speak him of march to Fort Wayne; spouse young Ingin come, good—spouse him no come, sleep till tomorrow."

"Very well, Winnebeg, you must arrange it as best you can, but contrive at least to keep them from prowling around the fort. At midnight, then, Mr. McKenzie, we shall commence the work of destruction. When you have made your own preparations, and wish to come in for aid, follow the subterranean passage that leads from the river near your warehouse to the sallyport; you will find the men there busily engaged, and ready for you the moment they have emptied the contents of our casks."

The commandant waved his hand in a familiar manner as he concluded, and the trader and the chief withdrew.

CHAPTER XVI.

"But I am constant as the northern star."—*Julius Cæsar.*

THE remainder of that day, the 12th of August, passed over without incident, but not without anxiety; for the Indians, no longer indulging in the indolence of the wigwam or the activity of the chase, occupied themselves with running, leaping, wrestling, jumping, throwing the rude stone quoit, and firing at a target with the bow. It might have seemed as though they sought to intimidate, as much by exuberance of spirits as by a display of numbers, the little garrison, who, it was clear, from the closing of the gate and the firing of the gun, no longer regarded them with the confidence they had ever hitherto manifested. These sports were evidently the prelude to some ulterior purpose, either immediate or not distantly remote, and the energy with which they were followed, attested the excitement with which the accomplishment was looked for. It seemed as though none would permit a moment of repose to the blood until the fond object for which it had been excited should have been attained.

All this was remarked from the fort; but, notwithstanding a vigilant lookout was kept up, Captain Headley had given orders that if small parties of the Indians should seek admission, it was not to be refused to them. This made the duty exceedingly severe, for the men, being compelled to work in harness under a scorching sun, suffered greatly, and none were sorry when, at the close of the day, not only their own task had partially terminated, but the jaded Indians, drunk with too much joy and excitement, were seen wending lazily for the night to their several places of repose.

At about midnight Captain Headley and his officers stood, not together, but on different parts of the rampart, watching the encampment of the Potawatomes. Most of their fires had been extinguished, but towards the centre where stood the tent of Winnebeg, there was a bright flickering glare, around which forms of men could be seen moving to the measured sound of the faintly audible and monotonous drum.

"Now, then, gentlemen, is the moment for exertion. Winnebeg has evidently found it easier, in their present humor, to get his warriors into a war-dance than a sober council; but no matter in what manner, provided their detention be secured. You will now move your men to the stores, and, in order not only to prevent accident, but noise, see that all are provided with their moccasins. Mr. Elmsley, you will take command of the party conveying the ammunition through the sallyport, and empty it into the well; and you, Mr. Ronayne, will proceed through the northern gate, roll the casks which I have directed each to be covered with a blanket to the edge of the river, cause their heads to be forced in noiselessly with chisels, then empty the contents—powder as well as rum—into the stream. No light must be used to betray your movements to the Indians, or to incur the risk of explosion. One lantern only hangs up in the store out of the reach of all harm, and it is transparent enough to enable you to see what you are about, to distinguish the several casks, those containing the powder and rum, from those in which are packed the bags of shot, flints, gun-screws, &c. All these latter you will throw into the well, with the spare

muskets, the stocks of which must be noiselessly broken up. This operation will take up some hours, gentlemen. The nights are not long, and it will require all the time until dawn to complete the work. Now, then, that you have your instructions, proceed to work with your respective parties. For myself, I shall superintend the whole."

Without replying, the two officers departed to execute the but too agreeable duty assigned to them, while Von Voltenberg, who had paid his professional visits for the night, was instructed to keep a vigilant lookout on the common until dawn, in order to detect any movement on the part of the Indians, singly or in parties, to approach the fort. Corporal Green, whose sight was remarkable for its keenness, was instructed to keep pacing the circuit of the rampart during the night, and to report to the doctor, for whom, in consideration of his being a non-combatant, a chair had been placed in a sentry box overlooking the encampment, anything remarkable that he might observe.

Nothing particular at first occurred during the execution of this important duty. The casks were silently rolled, knocked in, and emptied in the well and river. This took up many hours; but towards dawn, as Ensign Ronayne was following at some little distance in the rear of his men, he thought he observed a dark moving form as of a man crawling upon his belly, and endeavoring to approach as near as possible to the spot where the men were at work. Impressed at once with the assurance that it was some one sent by Pee-to-tum to watch the actions of the garrison, he advanced boldly up to him, being then distant at least fifty feet from his party, and near the awning which had been left standing for the accommodation of the Indians who were to receive their presents the next day. The prowler, finding it impossible to elude the officer in the position in which he was then gliding, suddenly started to his feet, and sought to escape detection in flight; but Ronayne, who was a very quick runner, and moreover wore moccasins as well as his men, soon came up with him, when the Indian rapidly turned, and, upraising his arm, prepared to strike a desperate blow at the chest of the unarmed youth. But even while the knife was balancing, as if to select some vulnerable part, another figure started suddenly from behind a part of the awning, close to which they all were, and grasping the arm of the assailant, dexterously wrested the weapon from his hand, and flung it far away from him upon the glacis.

All this was the work of a moment. The spy turned fiercely upon the intruder, and, saying something fiercely and authoritatively to him in Indian, strode leisurely away. Ronayne could not be mistaken. The first was Pee-to-tum, and even if he could not have traced the graceful outline of the well-knit figure, the soft and musical voice which replied to the scolding threat of the fierce chief sufficiently denoted it to be Wau-nan-gee.

"Heavens! how is this? Wau-nan-gee!" he asked, sternly, yet trembling with excitement in every limb, "why came you here? Why have you saved my life? Speak! are you not my enemy? Where is my wife?"

All these questions were asked with the greatest volubility, and in a state of mind so confused by the host of feelings the presence of the young Indian inspired, that he scarcely comprehended the latter as he replied:—

"Ah! love him too much, Ronayne wife—love him Ronayne too—Wau-nan-gee friend, dear friend—Wau-nan-gee die for him—Ronayne wife in Ingin camp—pale—pale, very much!"

"Answer me," said Ronayne, grasping him by the shoulder in pure excitement, "tell me truly, Wau-nan-gee—I will not hurt you if you do, but tell me, on the truth of an Indian warrior, is not my wife your wife? did she not go to you? does she not love you?"

"Ugh!" exclaimed the boy, with an expression of deep melancholy in his manner, "Wau-nan-gee love him too much, but not make him wife. Spouse him not Ronayne wife, then Wau-nan-gee; die happy spouse him Wau-nan-gee wife. Feel him dere, my friend—feel him heart—oh much sick for Maria—but Wau-nan-gee Ronayne friend no hurt him wife."

"Can all this be possible?" he exclaimed, vehemently to himself. "Oh, what a noble, but a generous being! He restores life and happiness to my heart! But still I am not yet convinced, the joy is too great for such light testimony. One question more, Wau-nan-gee: why did my wife leave this? Did you persuade her to go?"

"Yes, Ronayne, Wau-nan-gee tell him go. Shuh!" he continued, as if enjoining silence, and looking cautiously round, "no speak, Ronayne—Ingins very wicked—kill him garrison by, by—Ronayne and Maria—Wau-nan-gee friend, dear friend—Wau-nan-gee save him—Ingins kill him—Maria cry very much, promise no." Then drawing a handkerchief from his pocket, which the officer recognised, even in the gloom, as that which he had thrown down at Hardscrabble, and which was subsequently waved from the window of the farm-house, he handed it to him.

"Now, then," he exclaimed, "is all my doubt removed, and again am I the happiest of men in the assurance of the continued love of the adored one. Oh, Wau-nan-gee, my friend, my brother!" He threw himself into his embrace; he pressed him forcibly to his heart. "Oh, how true, how just was the feeling which caused me not to hate, even when I fancied you had most injured me! Wau-nan-gee, you must always be my friend; you must be Maria's friend; you must love us both!"

"Yes," said the Indian, warmly and with difficulty maintaining the stoicism of his race; "Wau-nan-gee happy to lay down his life for Ronayne and Maria; oh! Ronayne," and he took the hand of the Virginian and placed it on his chest which he bared, "can't tell how much Wau-nan-gee love him Maria—want to make him happy. Suppose Ronayne come now with Wau-nan-gee—take him to squaw camp. Stay there till battle over. Yes, come, come!"

"Noble and generous boy! how do you win my very soul to you!" returned the officer, as he again affectionately embraced him. "No, no, I cannot do that, great and severe as is this sacrifice of inclination. But what battle do you speak of?"

"Letter tell him all," said the youth. "Not say Wau-nan-gee say so."

"Wau-nan-gee," said Ronayne, impressively, "no doubt there is danger. We all know it. Was it not you who brought me a line from Maria this morning?"

"Yes, my friend. Pee-to-tum say attack him council. Wau-nan-gee tell him Maria write—afraid to say much."

"No doubt, then, we shall be attacked before many days are over; but,

thank God, she at least is safe. Wau-nan-gee, you must take care of her in the camp of your women. When all is safe, you will come to me with her."

"Mr. Ronayne," called a voice near the river, "where are you?"

It was Captain Headley.

"Good by, Wau-nan-gee," said the officer, "I must go. Give my love to Maria, and tell her I am sick to see her," and he put his hand over his heart, "and that I will join her when all danger is over; to-morrow night I shall have a letter for her. You can contrive to steal into the fort at night, and into my room unnoticed, Wau-nan-gee?"

"Spose him come," again urged the Indian, "Wau-nan-gee find him lit-
tle tent for Ronayne and his wife for two three days? Wau-nan-gee wait upon him, bring him food. Maria say come—must come."

"No, Wau-nan-gee, my dear friend, you know I cannot as a warrior think of myself alone; I must do my duty; but I am called. Good by, my noble boy. To-morrow night at twelve. God bless you! I leave my wife wholly to your care."

"Wau-nan-gee die for him," said the youth energetically, as, after again pressing the extended hand of the Virginian, he traced his way cautiously to the encampment.

"Mr. Ronayne," repeated Captain Headley, "where are you?"

"Here, sir; I have for a few moments been absent from my post, but I thought I remarked an Indian skulking near to watch our movements, and I followed him. I was not wrong; it was Peo-tum. When discovered, he rose to his feet and would have stabbed me, but Wau-nan-gee was near and ward off the blow."

"Wau-nan-gee! said you, Mr. Ronayne? Did he ward off the blow aimed at your life?"

"He did, sir; why should he not? We have always been friends."

Had it not been dark, Captain Headley would have looked as he felt, exceedingly puzzled for a reply.

"To tell the truth, Mr. Ronayne, I had not suspected this. I should rather have imagined that he was the chief instigator of the young men to discontent; but I am glad to find it otherwise."

For a moment it flashed across the mind of the Virginian that Mrs. Headley had, from policy or in confidence, communicated all she knew in regard to Maria's evasion to her husband. The idea of any man possessing the slight knowledge of wrong in his wife would have maddened him; but now that he in some measure knew the facts, and looked upon her in all the purity of her spotless nature, he was not sorry to have an opportunity to remove the impression; he, therefore, answered calmly, yet without adverting to the actual position of his wife.

"So far from that being the case, Captain Headley, Wau-nan-gee is the last person to engage in an outrage of the kind. Doubtless these letters, of which the youth has been the bearer, will explain much that is now a mystery."

The laborious duty of the night being now ended, the gates were once more fastened; and as the officers passed the lamp which hung over the entrance of the commandant's quarters, Ronayne glanced at the superscriptions of the two missives. The one was written in ink, and directed to Mrs. Headley; the other in pencil, and addressed to himself.

Ronayne was too impatient to know the contents of the letters to waste further time in conversation. At the invitation of Captain Headley, he entered and unfolded the note, while the commandant sought the apartment of his wife.

Mrs. Headley had thrown herself towards morning on her bed, but not to sleep; her mind was too full of apprehensions for the fast coming future, and for the melancholy, sad past; and, even at the moment when her husband entered, her thoughts were of the unfortunate Mrs. Ronayne.

"From Maria! is it possible?" she exclaimed, as she broke the seal. "Whence comes this? who brought it?"

"What think you of Wau-nan-gee!" he answered, significantly—"Wau-nan-gee, who saved within the hour her husband's life!"

"Then, by my soul, is she innocent!" exclaimed the generous woman, rising up. "Almighty God, I thank thee. Oh, how rashly have we judged; but let me read. The document is dated from this, the night before her departure; it is the same, no doubt, she should have inclosed before—not a word in addition. I will read it later. Where is Ronayne?"

"In the next room. He, too, has received a communication, which he is now reading. You had better go in to him, while I give some directions to Elmsley, which require to be attended to immediately. I shall rejoin you presently."

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN Mrs. Headley entered, unannounced, into the apartment where the Virginian was sitting, he brushed his hand across his eyes, but now they wept not only the emotion of grief that he betrayed, but of joy, of pride, of the fullness of life. He rose, pressed her hand warmly, and, giving her Maria's note to read, took the letter which she proffered in return.

"Ah! Ronayne," began the first, "what language can express my feelings—my fears—my agony. For the last week I have not seemed to live a human existence. My mind has been all chaos and confusion. I have been feverish, excited, scarcely conscious of my own acts, and filled with a strong dread of an evil which I know will come, must come, although only protracted. And yet, with all the horror of my position, how much more bitter might have been my self-reproach, my remorse, in having neglected, in my distraction, to inclose the packet for Mrs. Headley, which the noble-hearted, the devoted Wau-nan-gee now conveys. I thought I had given it to Sergeant Nixon, but Wau-nan-gee found it in the pocket of my saddle only yesterday. Oh, but for the arrival of Winnebago with the intelligence he brings, it would now be too late, and what, then, would have been my sensations? His appearance has altered the plans of the unfriendly portion of the Indians, who, presuming that the troops will soon leave the fort, have determined to wait for the division of the stores, and attack you on the march. But still they could not restrain their impatience, and the day of the council was fixed. All this I learned from Wau-nan-gee, who makes

me acquainted with everything that is going on, and is both hated and suspected by Pee-to-tum, who would willingly find him guilty of treachery, and if he could, I begged him, in my deep sorrow, to be the one to warn you, even amid all danger of detection, of a few words of warning which I knew you would sufficiently understand. He did go, while dashing up seemingly in defiance to the gate; and with a joy you may well understand, I marked the result. So far, then, has the step which my great love for you induced me to take, regardless of minor considerations, been of vital service to you all; for good and generous as Wau-nan-gee is, nothing short of his deep and respectful attachment would have led him to reveal the secrets of his people, and thus defeat their cruel purpose. But, oh! when I think that the danger is only deferred, not removed, how poor is the consolation! Dear Ronayne, my heart is sad, sad, sad! Last night I dreamed you were near, and this morning I awoke to horror, to know that, perhaps, your hours are numbered, while for me there is no hope of death, which then would be a blessing, except from my own hand! Oh, suffer me not to pray in vain if you would have me live! Once you evaded (oh, how cruelly!) the stratagem which would have saved your life and honor—which would have made you an unwilling prisoner with those who, for my own safety, hold me captive.

"Alas! had I not hoped that you would have been compelled to share my weary bondage until the dread crisis had passed, I had never been here; and now that the great object of my heart has failed, I would return, and share the danger that surrounds you. One more embrace would give me greater strength to die. One more renewal of each well-remembered face would make me firmer in resolve to meet the coming danger, that danger shared by all. But Wau-nan-gee, in all things else docile as a slave, in this denies me. In his mother's tent I dwell, disguised from the wretch Pee-to-tum in Indian garb, and, although she does not seem to do so, she watches my motions closely. Oh! then, since I may not go to you, come for a brief period to your adoring wife! Come with the occasion back with Wau-nan-gee. He will conduct you to the tent where now I am, some little distance from the general encampment, and never visited but by Winnebago and his son. You will say I am but an indifferent soldier's wife to give such counsel to a husband. I confess it; my love for you is greater than my regard for your glory. But what glory do you seek? March with the troops and ingloriously you perish; for what can avail defence against the strong force I know to be fully bent upon your destruction. Join me here and you are saved—saved for a long and future course of glory for your country—and, oh! far dearer to me, for a long and future course of wedded happiness. Yet, oh, God! how can my pencil trace this icy language, while my heart is desolate—longing—pining for your presence. Oh, beloved Ronayne! by all the vows of love you ever poured into my willing ear—by all the fires of passion you ever kindled in my heart, I conjure you to come, for I can endure this suspense, this cruel uncertainty no longer. To-night I shall count the long, long hours; and, oh! if Wau-nan-gee return without you, without one ray of hope to animate this breaking heart, I will not leave him until I have won his promise to conduct me at midnight to the secret entrance through which he has so often gained admission into the fort; or failing in my plea to him, I will make the attempt to fly myself. But, dear

Ronayne, if you come not, the measure of my grief will be full indeed to overflowing. I can no longer endure this."

Such was the last note of the unhappy and distracted Maria Ronayne. The document addressed to Mrs. Hoadley was more voluminous, and written of course under the impression that when read by the latter, her own husband would be secure from the danger it detailed. It was in substance as follows:

Wau-nan-gee, who had been absent for nearly a month in the immediate theatre of war near Detroit, and heard rumors of an intended attack upon Chicago, had hastened back with great expedition to announce to his friends the approaching danger; but much to his surprise, he found on his arrival that the news of that event had been known in the camp several days previously through the agency of certain emissaries who used every exertion to win the Pottowatomies over to Tecumseh and the British cause. A council had been secretly held before the return of Winnebago with the despatch from General Hull, and terms had been offered and proposals made on that occasion which were variously received, according to the humor, interests, and rapacity of the parties. By the majority of the chiefs, to their honor be it said, the proposal of treachery to the Americans was sternly rejected, but there was one of their number—Pee-to-tum—not a full-blooded Pottowatomic, but a sort of mongrel Chippewa, adopted in the tribe for his untamably fiendish disposition, connected with certain other mere animal qualities, who was loud in his invectives against the Americans for their asserted aggressions on the Indian territory, and he, by pointing out the advantages that would accrue to themselves by an alliance with England, won upon almost all the young warriors to decide in abandoning the American cause immediately. Thus, although there was no decided treaty made, there was a tacit understanding that all possible advantage was to be taken of circumstances, and whenever a favorable opportunity presented itself, the mask was to be thrown off. In vain Black Partridge, Koe-po-tah, Waubensee, and other Pottowatomic chiefs declared they washed their hands of all wrong that might be perpetrated. The young men, or the great majority of them, wanted excitement, blood, plunder; and they sustained Pee-to-tum in all that he advanced. Hoping, however, that the tumult would subside with the absence of those who first incited it, the chiefs did not like to alarm the commandant by a knowledge of what was going on among themselves, but were contented with recommending, as has already been seen, that he should remain in defence of his own post rather than confide himself to the safe keeping of those on whom he depended for an escort.

The night of the arrival of Wau-nan-gee he gleaned all this information; and filled with anxiety for the danger that threatened the wife of Ronayne, whom really he loved with a deep passion—yet one utterly unfed by hope or expectation of any kind whatever—he determined that night to enter the fort while her husband was on guard, and acquainting her with her danger, entreat her to allow him to conceal her until all was over. He succeeded, though not without some risk of being discovered in consequence of the exclamation of surprise and almost terror, which Mrs. Ronayne uttered on his appearance so suddenly and unexpectedly before her; but the humble manner of the boy—the deprecating yet earnest look he threw on her, and the lowly posture in which he crouched, soon satisfied her that there was

some important reason for his appearance at that hour of the night, which it was almost the suicidal folly. She, therefore, took the lead in reassuring him, and with an attempt at brightness, made him tell her what brought him there after so long an absence at that late hour of the night, and when he must have known that Romney was on guard and herself alone.

The boy shook his head with a sad and sad expression. "Come home, come home," he repeated; "no speak him Romney. Follow me. Kill him. Wau-nan-gee—oh, Wau-nan-gee very sick."

These few brief sentences, uttered in that melancholy and significant manner, rendered Mrs. Romney extremely nervous. She made him sit on the sofa. She took his hand—he asked her what he meant. With eyes swimming in his large, soft, long-lashed black eyes, he told her everything relating to the subject of his own return for the express purpose of seeking to her safety of the secret counsel of the Indians, and the fierce determination of Potto-tum and the misguided young men whose cupidity and passions he had so strongly awakened. He said he came to save her, to take her out of the best and all the trouble was over, to counsel herself in a spot, to watch her, and to protect her as a brother.

"And Romney—your friend, my husband—what will you do with him?" exclaimed Mrs. Romney, greatly excited and terrified by what she had heard. "Oh, Wau-nan-gee, can you not save us all? Will it not be enough to tell Capt. Headley what you know, and thus put him on a guard?"

"Suppose him tell Capt. Headley, begin know it. I begin know Wau-nan-gee tell him. Kill him Wau-nan-gee like a dog. Save him Maria."

"And will you not save Romney? If you care for me, Wau-nan-gee, you will save my husband."

"Save him love him very much husband?" he said, fixing a penetrating yet softened look on her.

"Yes, Wau-nan-gee, very much," returned Mrs. Romney with emphasis. "If you save one you must save the other."

Without pursuing the conversation further, it may suffice to remark that Wau-nan-gee left not Mrs. Romney until he had exacted her promise to meet him on the following afternoon in the summer house, when he said he would be enabled to show her a place where, with her husband, she might be concealed as soon as it was known on what day the Indians should have decided on their attack. This he pledged himself to have arranged in the course of the morning, so that by the afternoon she should be enabled to judge of the convenience it afforded. The truth's seen by Romney at Head's side, were hastily packed by Mrs. Romney with articles of clothing for him, and conveyed by Wau-nan-gee that night through his secret entrance to the summer-house, and subsequently removed.

Not liking to call attention to the circumstances of her crossing the water unaccompanied, and moreover, really dreading the presence of one of her own sex to act on her in the course that had been forced upon her, she had requested Mrs. Headley to bear her company. On her entering the summer-house the trap-door, which appeared to have been made that very morning, was open; but instead of Wau-nan-gee, she beheld standing near its entrance another dark Indian whom she had too much reason to fear and dread.

It has already been remarked that Potto-tum was not a genuine Potto-

but one of that race whose very name is a synonym with treachery and falsehood—a Chippewa. With low, heavy features; a dark, bushy brow; coarse, black, dark hair, shading the restless, ever-moving eyes that, like that of the serpent, seemed to fascinate where most the cold, slimy animal sought to sting; the broad, coarse nose; the skin partaking in the Chippewa, of that offensive, rank odor peculiar to the Indian, and many others of the race; with all these loathsome attributes of person, and with a soul swelling with the most unbounded vanity and self-sufficiency, and on ignorance and assumption; this man, although having a wife and children grown up, had dared to cast the eye of desire on Mrs. Ronayne. Long had he watched her, not as the gentle, the pure, the self-sacrificing Wau-nan-gee, but as a tiger gloating for his prey. To possess her had been one of his leading motives in urging the alliance with the tribes in the British interests—to hasten the moment she might become a prisoner in his hands, his chief aim in stirring up the young warriors into a determination of early attack.

Only two days prior to the return of Wau-nan-gee he had been in the fort, and passing near Mrs. Ronayne as she was amusing herself at battle-dore with her friend, Mrs. Elmley, remarked to a companion as he bent his eyes insolently upon her: "The white chiefs' wives are amusing themselves. They are wise. In a few days we shall have them in our wigwams."

No notice was taken of the remark at the time. Mrs. Ronayne had more than once noticed the eyes of the loathsome Chippewa fixed upon her with an expression she shuddered at but could not define, and she had attributed his words on that occasion to impotent anger and disappointment, at the dislike she had conceived for him.

This was the loathsome being she now met, and knowing, as she did, from Wau-nan-gee, all that he meditated in regard to himself and friend, the horror she experienced may be conceived. Rapidly, and in time to suppress in a great measure the scream she attempted to give, the savage placed one hand upon her mouth, and clasping her tightly round the waist, bore her to the opening through which he made her rudely descend, still keeping his hand upon her mouth.

When the feet of Mrs. Ronayne touched the bottom of that seemingly living tomb, she was so paralysed by fear that she had not strength to support herself, and but for the arm of the dark chief still clasped around her waist, she must have fallen. The very sight of her weakness inflamed the Chippewa the more. He removed her hat and threw it on the ground. The vast volume of her brown hair he unfastened from the comb. It fell, enveloping her figure to her knees. The eyes of the brutal Chippewa flashed fire in the half darkness that prevailed around. The hand hitherto held upon her mouth, now fell upon and fiercely pressed her bosom, and his hideous lips sought hers. With a violent effort she tore them from the pollution of his touch, and uttering a faint cry of despair, sank fainting from his now loosening grasp. What followed she could not tell; but when some minutes afterwards she came to her senses, weak and exhausted from excitement, Wau-nan-gee was sitting at her side chafing her palms with his own, and with the large tears coursing down his cheeks.

At the first sight of the boy Mrs. Ronayne started, for she fancied that she must have been laboring under the influence of a dream, and that not

Pee-to-tum, but himself, had used the violence she experienced; but when she recalled all that had passed, perceived her own disorder of dress, and remarked the unfeigned attention of the youth, she knew that it could not be so. Still deeply agitated, she asked him anxiously where the Chippewa was, and wherefore he and not Wau-nan-gee had been in the summer-house as promised, when she came in. With every appearance of profound sorrow and sincerity, the youth replied that he knew not how Pee-to-tum had got there—that he himself, after leaving the trap-door open ready for the descent of Mrs. Ronayne, had gone to the further extremity of the vault for the purpose of removing a large stone which blocked up a hole admitting the fresh air from above near the cottage, and that he was returning by this passage, which was narrow but nearly six feet in height, when he heard the cry for aid, and knowing it to be hers he had flown to her assistance, but that the sound of his approaching footsteps must have alarmed the Chippewa and caused him to fly—stopping motionless, perhaps, till he, Wau-nan-gee, had passed him, and then escaping by the same outlet. He it must have been whom Mrs. Headley had remarked stealing across the garden just before she entered it with Maria.

Once reassured of the fidelity and truth of the boy, Mrs. Ronayne, although painfully, distractingly ignorant of the extent to which the insolence of Pee-to-tum had been carried, was too much absorbed in the consideration of her husband's safety to lose sight of the subject more immediately at her heart, in more personal regrets that now were of little avail. She said to Wau-nan-gee that the place in which she then was would certainly have been well suited to the purpose intended but for two reasons; firstly, that now having been discovered by Pee-to-tum, it would no longer be secure; and secondly, that her husband would never consent to abandon his comrades to secure his own safety. She proposed, instead, that a plan should be arranged to make them both prisoners while out on the following day, and in such manner that it should be supposed in the garrison that the capture had been effected by hostile Indians; and to this the youth joyfully assented, stating that a number of his friends less hostile in their intentions might be procured to aid him in the matter. It was arranged that this should be done on the following day, and this at so great a distance from the encampment that Pee-to-tum should know nothing of the occurrence till both husband and wife were beyond his reach.

"It is a strange and a wild project," she remarked, "but the crisis is desperate, and anything to save my husband's life. But now I must go, dear Wau-nan-gee; Mrs. Headley is in the garden waiting for me."

"No, no go," he said; "spose him Mrs. Headley go home. Wau-nan-gee take Maria home by by. Got canoe here. No let him go home. Pee-to-tum wicked—Pee-to-tum got Ingin plenty yonder," and he pointed in the direction of the cottage; "Pee-to-tum carry off Maria—go see where he is. Shut him door till Wau-nan-gee come back. Mrs. Headley come, no see him here; no tink him here."

He accordingly ascended, fastened down the trap-door and departed, as we have said, little anticipating to have been seen by Mrs. Headley.

He had not been five minutes gone when she heard a dull, heavy sound which satisfied her that the stone was being rolled from the orifice spoken of by Wau-nan-gee. Feeling assured that Pee-to-tum had seen him depart,

and knowing her to be there and helpless, was returning to renew his odious and brutal passion, she sought to rise in order to force up and escape by the trap-door. This she did, regardless of her disordered appearance, and without even thinking of hat or comb; but she had no sooner moved a step forward when she again fell down, as much paralysed by fear as exhausted by weakness. In her helplessness she could only sob and moan and vainly deplore the absence of her late rescuer, while all her thoughts and feelings were of her husband. The footsteps advanced; she grew at each moment more nervous, more terrified. She had scarcely the power to move herself on the spot where she half sat, half reclined. Presently the trap-door was heard to move, soon it opened, and there to her astonishment, yet not less to her exceeding embarrassment, inasmuch as she could not, without compromising the saviour of her honor—the purposed saviour of her life, explain in what manner she had been placed in the strange position in which she had been found, she beheld Mrs. Headley. What followed is known to the reader. It was not, however, Pee-to-tum whom Mrs. Ronayne had heard rolling away the stone, but Wau-nan-gee returning to set her free for the present, as he had seen the soldiers at the gate and knew that she was safe.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"This is my glove—by this hand I will take thee a box on the ear."—*Henry V.*

The following morning was as bright and glorious as an August sun could render it, but its very brilliancy seemed a mockery to the gloom and despair that filled the hearts of the little garrison. Still, notwithstanding the treachery few were ignorant the Indians intended, there was a bearing among all, from the commanding officer down, that, while attesting determination and confidence in themselves, left no ground for a suspicion that the designs of their treacherous allies had been revealed.

The guard was mounted, as usual, and the customary formalities of the military service complied with, and arrangements were made, soon after the men had eaten their breakfasts, for the conveyance of the stores to the glacis.

At twelve o'clock all was ready, and the mass of Indian warriors, painted and armed, moved in loose and disorganized bodies across the plain, and grouped around their chiefs, who, seated on the ground, received for the young men the presents which had been set apart in divisions for every ten. The cloths, blankets, trinkets, and provisions, were first handed over, but when on coming to the ammunition and liquor only one cask of each was found, the indignation of the whole band, the chiefs excepted, was, as had been expected, excessive.

"My Father promised us plenty of powder and plenty of liquor," exclaimed Pee-to-tum, stamping with his feet and gesticulating violently; "Where is it?"

"This is all that is left of the stores," exclaimed Capt. Headley. "When we reach Fort Wayne you shall have more."

"My Father lies," returned the Chippewa. "Pee-to-tum did not sleep

like a lazy hound in his tent last night ; he crawled near the fort ; he heard the powder barrels knocked in with axes ; he heard the rum poured into the river like water. Even to-day," and he pointed with his clenched tomahawk, "the river is red with liquor till it is 'strong grog.' What should prevent us from avenging ourselves for this cheat, by mixing the blood of our father with the same water till it looks like strong rum also ?" A terrific yell burst from the surrounding warriors, who all brandished their tomahawks in a menacing manner.

"What should prevent you ?" said Capt. Headley, suddenly carried out of his usual prudence by the insolence of the ruffian—"what should and will prevent you !" and he pointed to the bastion, which had been manned as on the former occasion, while the burning matches seemed only to await his signal. "Each of those guns contains a bag of fifty bullets, and each bullet can kill its enemy. Now then, have but the courage to lay a hand upon me and you will see the result. See, I am alone—only Mr. McKenzie to witness the act."

There was a pause of a few moments, during which low murmurs broke from the younger Indians, and the dark and subtle eye of Pee-to-tum quailed before the bold look of the commanding officer, who continued :

"As for you, vile Chippewa, you are the sole cause of all these troubles, all this excitement in the young men of the Pottowatomie Nation. You are of that dark and malignant race, as far below the Pottowatomie in every thing that is noble and generous and good as the Evil Spirit is below the Good Spirit. There is nothing but falsehood and treachery in their selfish and avaricious nature. They are deceitful, and so given to love rum that when an Indian is seen wallowing like a hog in the gutter, and with the foam disgorging from his blue and lizard-like lips, stabbing right and left indiscriminately, as if hatred and the sight of blood were essential to his very existence, you may at once know him to be a Chippewa. How then can such a man, and of such a race, disgrace and dishonor the councils of the war-path of the nobler Pottowatomies ? How, I ask, can Black Partridge, Winnebago, Waubensee, To-kee-nee-bee, and Kee-po-tah consent to allow such a mongrel chief to exercise an influence among their warriors hostile to the Americans, who have ever treated them with kindness, even when they themselves do not seem to second him in his views ?"

The scorn Captain Headley threw into his voice and manner as he uttered these words, which they perfectly understood, was such that Pee-to-tum, whose fingers played tremulously with the handle of his tomahawk, could not, without difficulty, refrain from using it ; but when he glanced upwards and saw Lieutenant Elmsley attentively watching all that passed with his glass, his rage was stifled, but inwardly he vowed to be revenged. The young men evinced great excitement also ; and from that moment, on this occasion particularly, it was evident to Captain Headley that they were entirely under the influence of the Chippewa.

"Father," said Black Partridge, rising and solemnly replying to the appeal just made by Captain Headley, "this medal I have worn for many years upon my breast. It was given me by the Great Father of the Americans as a token of a friendship I never have broken ; but since everything tells me that my young men, who I grieve to say will no longer obey the voice of their grey-headed chiefs, have determined to wash their hands in

American blood, it would not be right in me to keep this token of peace any longer. Father," he concluded, removing the ribbon by which it was suspended over his chest, "I deliver the medal back to you, and may you live to see and tell our Great Father that Black Partridge was ever faithful to the United States, and washes his hands of all that may now happen."

The same disclaimer was made by Winnebago and the other friendly chiefs; lastly, Pee-to-tum rose:

"Dog!" he said, insolently, as he tore his medal from his chest and held it up for a moment, dangling in his hands, "tell him you serve, if you live to see him, that Pee-to-tum, the dark Chippewa, is for ever his enemy—that wherever he can do so he will spill the blood of the Yankee, till it runs like the rum your warriors spilt last night; tell him that Pee-to-tum spits upon his face thus!" Then, throwing it contemptuously on the ground and stamping upon it with his moccasined feet, he burst forth into a laugh intended to be as insulting as the act itself.

This profanation was too much for Captain Headley. He rose from his chair, and exclaiming in his fury, "take that, damned Chippewa, in return!" first spat in his face and then hurled at him his heavy military glove, which happening to strike the pupil of his eye while in full glare of indignation at the first insult, it was deprived of sight for ever.

Great was the tumult that now ensued. Incapable of acting himself from the intensity of agony he suffered, Pee-to-tum could only utter fierce howlings and threats of vengeance, but several of the warriors advanced furiously upon the commanding officer with the most startling yells and threatening manner. The latter, hopeless of escape, but determined to sell his life dearly, drew his sword while he presented a pistol with his other hand.

"McKenzie," he said quickly, "get out of the way! remember me to Ellen!" and then elevating his voice to such a pitch as he knew would be heard in the fort, he distinctly uttered the command "fire!"

But the order had been anticipated. Even as the word fell from his lips the curling smoke from a gun was seen, and loud cheers succeeding to the report burst from every man upon the ramparts, while a second and smaller American flag was waved triumphantly by the hand of Ronayne above the piece which had just been discharged.

Astonished at this unexpected scene, the Indians, who had been greatly startled not only at the command which had been so coolly given by the commanding officer, but by the discharge they had incorrectly deemed aimed at themselves, suddenly ceased their clamor, and following the course to which the attention of those within the garrison appeared to be directed, beheld, to their surprise, five-and-twenty tall and well-mounted horsemen dressed in the costume of warriors, and headed by a man of great size, rushing rapidly along the road leading from Hardscrabble for the fort.

The nearer they approached the louder became the shouts of the soldiers, until finally the latter all left the ramparts, evidently to open the gates and welcome the new-comers, who soon disappeared through the opening.

The arrival of these strangers, small as their number was, had evidently an effect upon the Pottowatomies, who for a moment looked grave, and attempted no longer to molest Captain Headley. Mr. McKenzie, who was still present and knew how to take advantage of the occasion, profited by the surprise, and suggested to the commanding officer, that as the conference

was now over and the presents all delivered, they should return to the fort to know who the new-comers were. The friendly chiefs were, moreover, invited to accompany them; and thus they returned leisurely, without further interruption, into the stockade. Pec-to-tum, suffering severely, had been led to his tent; and the great bulk of the warriors, freed from the excitement of his presence, busied themselves with collecting together their individual shares of the presents they had received. During the whole of the afternoon they were to be seen wending their way leisurely, and in small and detached groups—sometimes in single file—from the glacis to their own encampment.

"Headley, my dear fellow," exclaimed the leader of the party—a tall, powerful, sunburnt man, dressed like his companions, who now stood dismounted, holding the bridle of his jaded horse and conversing with the Doctor, for the other officers were still at their posts. "Is what I hear then true—and have I only arrived in time to be too late? Is all your ammunition then destroyed—all, all, all—none left?" These questions were anxiously put as the stranger held the hand of the commanding officer grasped in his own.

"It is even so," returned Captain Headley, impressed with deep regret for the act, for in a moment he saw that this addition to his little force would have enabled him to maintain his post until the arrival of the British at least—"all that remains are twenty rounds of cartridges for the pouches of the men, and a single keg for use if necessary on the march—not six rounds of ammunition remain for the guns."

"By G—, how unfortunate!" returned the stranger, striking his brow with his palm; "had I been but eighteen hours sooner you were all saved, for here are five-and-twenty as gallant and willing hearts as ever wielded tomahawk or rifle. Hearing of your extremity I had hastily collected them to afford you succor. Oh, I could eat my heart up with disappointment!" he continued, "to think that all my exertions, my speed, have been in vain. Headley, what could have induced you to destroy the ammunition—your only hope of salvation?"

"What has been done," replied the commanding officer, with unfeigned sorrow at his heart as he reflected on the subject, "cannot be undone; but, my dear Wells, it was impossible that we could divine the generous interest which was sending you to our rescue; and had not the powder and other ammunition been destroyed it must have fallen into the hands of those who I grieve to say are but too ready to use it against us. Moreover, purposing as I did, and do, to march to-morrow morning, at all risks and under whatever circumstance, I had given up this day all provisions not necessary for our subsistence on the march. If then even the ammunition had remained, we must have suffered from want of food."

"What, with those five-and-twenty horses, Headley?" returned the other, pointing to the group that stood in the centre of the barrack square. "Not so. They would have been sufficient when killed and dried to have yielded us food for a month. No man knows better how to make pemmican than myself. Still," he continued, with greater vivacity, "there is a hope. I have shown the manner in which the provisions can be replaced, and I know you have a well within the sally-port into which can be received the waters of Lake Michigan—let search be made and instantly, and no doubt out of

all that you have thrown away, sufficient serviceable powder may be found to enable us to defend the fort for ten days longer, when something will assuredly turn up to better our condition."

"Would that it could be so," returned Captain Hendley, with a solemnity rendered more profound from the very smallness of the contingency on which the safety of so much depended, "but there is no hope. Anticipating that the Indians would attempt the very course you now suggest—that of saving what powder might be uninjured by the slimy bed into which it was thrown, all has been so mixed up with rum and other liquids as to be rendered utterly useless. Everything seems to be against us."

"Then, since all hope is over," returned the stranger with marked disappointment, "we will not indulge in vain regrets for the past, but make the best preparation for to-morrow. It is only to die in business after all. But, alas! I pity the poor women. How is my dear Ellen—how does she support this severe affliction?"

"Bravely—nobly, like herself," returned the commanding officer with emotion. "She will be delighted, yet grieved to behold you—delighted at the generous devotion that has brought you so far, and at the head of so small a force to our assistance; grieved because she will know that you have only come in time to share our fate. But dispose of your party and come in. Serjeant Nixon," he called to that official, whom he saw passing from the rampart to the guard-house.

The non-commissioned officer was soon at his side, and the captain having given him directions to quarter the Indians for the night in the officers' mess-room, liberally supplying them and their horses with whatever they might require, and the stranger having himself addressed some remarks to his people in the Miami tongue, they both repaired with heavy hearts to the quarters of the former.

The meeting between Captain Wells and Mrs. Hendley—the uncle and niece, both of whom entertained a strong natural affection, founded as much on similarity of character as on mere blood connexion—was a very affecting one. They had long been separated, and year after year a visit of a few weeks had been promised by the former to Chicago; but the multiplicity of his public duties, for he was an active agent in the Indian Department, had always prevented him from carrying his intention into execution. But now when he heard of the danger to which the garrison was exposed, and his beloved niece in particular, he lost not a moment in appointing a deputy to perform his duties during his absence, and collecting five-and-twenty warriors whom he knew to be not only devoted to him but the most resolute of the Miami race, he hurried off with the object of forming a sort of body-guard to the ladies of the detachment which he had been informed had received the instructions of General Hall to proceed forthwith to Fort Wayne. Had he had reason to doubt the faith of the Pottowatomies intended to form the escort of the detachment generally, he might and would have brought with him a much larger force; but it was not until after he had traversed almost the whole of the one hundred and eighty miles which he and his party had ridden without rest, that he obtained information of the Indian disaffection. Alarmed lest he should be too late, he and his party urged their harassed steeds to greater speed, and having made a signal to the garrison, which was seen by Ronayne through the telescope

he kept constantly to his eye, the gun was fired, the flag waved, and the shouts pealed forth that, in all probability, in drowning his words of command saved the life of his friend and relative.

"Well, Ellen, my love," proposed Capt. Headley, after a good deal of conversation on the subject of their position had taken place, "as this is to be the last of the many days which, until within a week, we have passed so happily in Chicago, what say you to our all dining here together? With many of us it will, doubtless, be for the last time. We have still a few bottles of claret left in which to drink your uncle's health, mixed up only with a regret that his visit to us had not occurred at a happier period."

"Most willingly, Headley, I approve your suggestion, and shall cause the dinner to be prepared. All I ask is the assistance of Mrs. Elmsley and Ronayne's servants. With their aid my own servants can even contrive to manage something for a dinner."

"*Dum vivimus, vivamus!*" exclaimed the herculean and resolute captain. "I can see no reason why, because we are to be shot down and perhaps eaten to-morrow, we should not enjoy the pleasure of a little social eating and drinking ourselves to-day? I am not one to lament fruitlessly over that which cannot be avoided. Sufficient for the day, as scripture has it, is the evil thereof. I certainly go in for the dinner and a glass of claret. It will help to wash down half the dust I have swallowed within the last forty-eight hours."

"Well, gentlemen," said Mrs. Headley, with a playfulness extraordinary for the occasion, but which was induced solely by a design to set the minds of her friends at ease, by impressing them with a belief that her unconcern was greater than it really was, "while I prepare the feast, go you out into what highways and byways are left to us and invite our friends. Uncle, you have not seen Mrs. Elmsley since she was a young, dashing, and unmarried belle. She will be delighted to meet with you. Tell her I will take no denial—both herself and husband must attend. We shall dine at five, becoming fashionable as we stand on the brink of the grave; and by the way, Headley, all these troubles have made me quite forget it, but this is the anniversary not only of my birth but wedding day."

"God bless you!" said her husband, tenderly embracing her, "and grant of his great mercy that you may see many returns of the day under far brighter and more auspicious circumstances!"

CHAPTER XIX.

It was a curious sight—one that could only have been witnessed in a military community, used to scenes of excitement and ever prepared for danger—to see under the roof of the commanding officer of Fort Dearborn, not only men but delicate and educated and highly accomplished women, partaking, with seeming unconcern, of a meal which each felt might be the last but one they were fated to taste on earth, and as it were with the sword of Damocles suspended over their heads. There was an evident desire to banish from the mind any thought of the morrow—to sustain each other, yet with the conviction strong at their hearts that none of them would ever

live to see Fort Wayne. They, nevertheless, talked seriously and deprecatingly of the change they would find between the two quarters—the one just overtopping the wild flats of Ohio, like a solitary oasis in the desert; the other, that which they were about to leave—rich in rides and drives, offering every facility and amusement to the lover of the gun and of the rod—to those whose taste led them to prefer rowing over the comparatively tiny waters of the Chicago, or sailing along the broad expanse of the noble Michigan. But they could not wholly succeed in cheating themselves into temporary forgetfulness of the much that was to intervene before that change could be effected. Now and then there would be a painful pause in the conversation; and then as each glanced into the eyes of each, and could distinctly read the dominant thought that was passing in his mind, another attempt would follow to give a tone of indifference to the subject.

Not so with the humbler portion of the garrison. On the contrary, there was no attempt to conceal from each other, or from themselves, the magnitude and extent of the danger that awaited them; but in proportion as they even magnified the peril, so was their determination increased to defend themselves and families if attacked, to the last. The single men talked in groups, and hesitated not to condemn in strong language, the course pursued by their commanding officer, for it was obvious to all that had he at the first decided on defending the fort, the Indians never would have acted in the insolent and hostile manner they had manifested; and even if they had, the provisions and ammunition preserved, they might, with this newly arrived strength, have made a defence of months against their treachery. The principal spokesmen were Serjeant Nixon, Corporals Green and Weston, and Phillips, Case, Watson, and Degarmo, who having been the last whose fortune it had been to smell powder against the Indians, were considered as being more immediately competent to speak on the occasion. Such of the married men as were off guard passed what hours they could in consoling and sustaining the courage of their poor wives, who wept bitter tears and uttered ceaseless lamentations, not so much on account of the trials that awaited themselves as their helpless children, in a distressing march through the wilderness, which they regarded with nearly as great horror as the tomahawk of the Indian itself.

To return, however, to the quarters of the commandant. It must not be assumed that because the excellent claret of that officer, to which had been added a few bottles saved from Mr. McKenzie's private stock, was enjoyed with a gusto not habitual to men in the same position with our little band of martyrs, there was the disposition to drown care through that tempting medium, or to indulge in the slightest degree in excess; or if there was an exception it was to be found in Von Voltenberg, who managed now and then dexterously to top off an extra glass, until by repeated little manœuvres of this kind he had in the end been one bottle ahead of his companions. Soon after dinner Ronayne, whose spirits had been cheered on the one hand and depressed on the other by the letter of his wife, had, at the suggestion of Mrs. Headley, read for the satisfaction and information of all the document addressed to himself; and when this was concluded, exciting in the minds of all, and particularly those yet unacquainted with the contents, renewed interest in her fate, the ladies withdrew to complete such of their arrangements for the march as were still necessary. On their depart-

are followed by the customary and, in this instance, heart impelled honors, and the health of the newly-arrived guest being drunk, as "The Hero of the Valley of the Miami," Mr. McKenzie took the occasion to remark:

"I have heard much of the prowess evinced by Captain Wells, both against General St. Clair's army and while acting with that of General Wayne, and should like much to know from his own lips whether report speaks correctly of him or not. Come, captain, the opportunity may not soon occur again—will you indulge us?"

"Willingly," returned the captain, raising his tall and herculean frame in his chair and draining off his claret: "As you say, the opportunity may not again soon occur: there is something here," and he pointed with his finger to his breast, "that tells me that of the many fights in which I have been engaged, that of to-morrow will be the last."

All looked grave, but no one answered. Each seemed to think that such would be his own individual case.

"Pass the wine, Headley," resumed his relative. "Gentlemen, you must not expect me to enter into a history of all my old fights, both against and in defence of my own country. That would occupy me until to-morrow morning; and you know we have other work cut out for us. I will simply give you an outline—a very skeleton of the causes which found me first fighting against St. Clair, and subsequently in the ranks of Wayne."

Without encroaching on the patience of the readers of this tale by using his precise words, it can only be necessary here to give an epitome of the military career of Captain William Wells, which was indeed one of no ordinary kind. He was a native of Kentucky, and in early boyhood—being scarcely ten years of age—had been taken prisoner, during a foray into that then wild state by the Miami Indians. Being a boy of remarkable symmetry, resolution, and intelligence, he was greatly noticed by one of the principal chiefs of the tribe, who adopted him as a son, and trained him to battle, into which he invariably went whenever most was to be done. This mode of life young Wells loved so greatly, and the kindness shown him was such that he never entertained the slightest regret at the loss of old associations, or a desire to return to them. At the time of the great battle between the Indians and General St. Clair, he had gained the reputation of being one of the most formidable warriors, both from his skill and great personal strength in the ranks of the Miamis; and entertaining no scruple of conscience, simply because he had not taken the trouble to reflect on the subject, entered with all the ardor of his nature into that contest, and it was said that a greater number of the American soldiers fell by his hand than any other individual warrior engaged, and now he rose higher than ever in the estimation of his tribe. But the very circumstance of his prowess and success had the effect of dissociating him for ever from those in whose cause he had triumphed. After that sanguinary battle, so fatal to the American arms, he for the first time began to reflect on the great wrong he had done to his own race, and resolved to atone for the past by killing, in fair fight, one Indian at least for every American that had fallen beneath his tomahawk and rifle. Acting promptly on this suddenly-formed resolution he at once abandoned his adopted father, and his Indian wife and children, and hastened to Gen. Wayne, to whom he offered his services. By that officer he was gladly employed, principally as a scout, almost up to the close of the

war: and during its continuance many were the daring feats he performed. One example must suffice.

A short time previous to the great battle of 1794, Wells, on whom General Wayne had conferred the rank of captain, took with him a subaltern and eleven men, for the purpose of watching the movements of his old companions in arms. His men were all well trained to the peculiar duty they were called upon to perform, and, after having marched three days with a caution and knowledge of the forest scarcely surpassed by the Indians themselves, found that they were on the fresh trail of the enemy, although how many in number they could not tell. They followed leisurely until night, when having seen but one large encampment, Capt. Wells came to the determination, if the disparity of numbers should not be too great, of attacking them. Every disposition was made. The party crept cautiously near them and then lay down in ambush, while their leader, as had been arranged, entered their camp fearlessly and as a friend, and sat himself down on the right of the circle, rapidly counting their numbers as he did so. There were found to be twenty-two warriors with one squaw. On being interrogated he stated that he had just come from the British Fort Miami, and was on his way to stir up the Indians to fight General Wayne. As he declared himself very hungry the squaw hospitably put some hominy on the fire to warm for his supper, of which he had intended to partake abundantly had not a misapprehension on the part of his men hastened the moment of action, and embittered all the satisfaction he would otherwise have derived from his success. A motion of his hand was to have been a signal to fire, each selecting his man; and the party, conceiving that he had given this, acted prematurely, not only depriving him of his supper, which was not yet ready, and of which he stood in great need, but killing the unfortunate squaw who was standing up stirring it at the time, and whom he had intended to save. The next moment the formidable and dreaded tomahawk of the captain went to work among the survivors, and out of the twenty-two warriors but three escaped; he himself receiving a wound from a ramrod shot through his wrist, and his lieutenant being hit by a bullet in the thigh. The greatest havoc committed on this occasion was by Wells himself, and it was his boast that in Wayne's war he had slain a far greater number of Indians than he had killed Americans throughout the contest with St. Clair; and coolindeed must have been the determination of the man who could composedly sit down alone and in the face of twenty-two warriors, some of whom it might have been expected would have recognised him, or to whom accident might have betrayed the proximity of his party, and resolve to dispatch an ample supper before proceeding to the work of blood. But these were the usages of the war in which he had been educated, and a nobler and more generous heart than that of Captain Wells never beat beneath the war-paint of an Indian.

Such was the man, the outline of whose story we have necessarily condensed, who now, at the head of those Indians whom he once fought for, and subsequently against, came to proffer his aid to the unfortunate garrison of Fort Dearborn. What such an arm and such daring might have accomplished, had circumstances combined to second his efforts, can easily be surmised; but, unfortunately, all was now of no avail, for the very sinews of success had been wrung from him, and he felt that the utmost desperation

of courage must be insufficient to stem the tide of numbers that would lie in wait for their prey on the morrow. But although he was not mad enough to expect that if attacked anything but defeat and slaughter could ensue, nothing would have pleased him more than an encounter on the open prairie with the false Pottowatomies, notwithstanding their great odds, and not the lives of women and helpless children been at stake. These were the considerations that weighed with him the most; for independently of his strong affection for his noble fiancée and his interest in her companions, he had never forgotten the action on which the poor Indian sprang was not down across the fire over which she was performing an act of kindness to herself; and often and often, during his after life of repose from the toils of war, had her blood risen to his imagination as if in reproach for the act. If this could be called a weakness, it was the only weak point that could be found in his character.

As there was little reason to apprehend that the Indians would occasion any annoyance during the night to those whom they were so certain to take at an advantage in the morning, when far removed from their defenses, Captain Headley had caused the garrison to be divided into two watches—the one being stationed on the ramparts until midnight, when they were ordered to be relieved by the second party, who in the meantime slept—thus affording to all a few hours of that repose of which for the last week they had scarcely tasted.

Midnight had arrived. The watches had been changed, and Corporal Collins being of the new relief, had, after disposing his men in the most advantageous manner to detect an approach, taken his own station near the flag-staff, a point where the greater vigilance was necessary, by reason of the storehouses and other outbuildings of Mr. McKenzie; under cover it was not difficult for a cautious enemy to approach the place unperceived.

He had not been at this point half an hour when he fancied he could discover in the darkness the outline of a man moving cautiously across the ground which had been used for the council, and seemingly endeavoring to gain the rear of the factory. He challenged loudly and abruptly, but there was no answer. Expecting to see the same figure emerging from the opposite cover of the building, he fixed his keen eye on that spot, when, as he had conjectured, it fell upon the same outline, but now performing a wider circuit. The challenge was repeated, but the figure instead of answering remained perfectly stationary. A third time the corporal challenged, and no answer being returned he very indiscreetly fired, when the figure fell to the earth apparently shot dead.

The report at that hour of the night naturally caused a good deal of commotion, and brought every one to the spot—not only the officers from their rooms but the watch that had thrown themselves, accoutred as they were, upon their beds. Ronayne, who had retired early for the purpose, was at the time in the act of completing a long letter which he had written in reply to a wife, in which, after pouring forth his soul in the most impassioned expressions of affection, he urged her in the strongest manner, and by every hope of future happiness on earth, not to adopt the rash step she had threatened, and to preserve his courage, and lessen his fortitude to bear, by her presence in the midst of danger, but to remain secure where she was, with Wau-nan-gee's mother, until the crisis had passed. "I shall fight valiantly

and successfully," he concluded. "if you are not near to distract me by a knowledge of your proximity to danger. If, on the contrary, you, in your great and dear love, persist in your design, I feel that I shall perish like a coward. I inclose you a part of myself, in the meantime—a lock of my hair."

On hearing the report of the musket a fearful misgiving had oppressed him, for he knew that this was about the hour when Wau-nan-gee had promised to come for his letter, and he hurried to ascertain what had occasioned the discharge. The result of his inquiry was not satisfactory. Had the whole Indian force been discovered stealing upon and surrounding them for a night attack, they would not have carried half the dismay to his soul that he experienced when Corporal Collins told him that he had fired at a solitary individual who was creeping up to the fort and would not answer, although challenged three times.

"Corporal," he said, in a low tone, "I have ever been a staunch friend to you, and by that unlucky shot you have destroyed me. The person you fired at was Wau-nan-gee. I feel assured. He was coming for a letter from me to Mrs. Ronayne who is a prisoner, not with other Indians as we had supposed, but in the Pottowatomic camp. The only way you can repair this wrong is by going out secretly through the sally-port and examining the body to see if it really is he."

"Look, look, look!" said the corporal, who had kept his eye fixed on the dark shadow hitherto motionless on the ground; "he is not dead—see, he rises, and walks rapidly but stealthily in the direction he was taking when I fired."

"And that is to the rear of the stockade, where he has discovered some secret entrance, perhaps in consequence of the picketing having rotted away below. Not a word of this, Collins. If it is he, as I feel assured it is, he will go out again soon, and you must see that he is not interfered with. He must bear my letter to my wife."

"You may depend upon it, Mr. Ronayne, he shall not be touched. I will again keep that post myself."

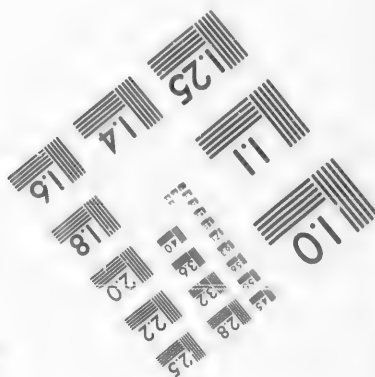
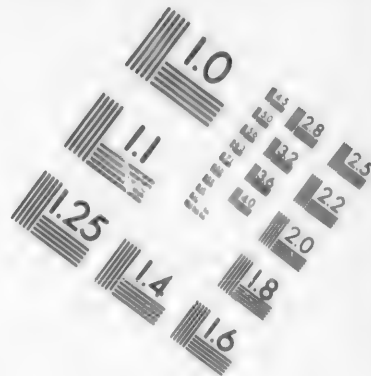
The Virginian was right. He had not two minutes regained his room, when a slight tap at the window announced his young and faithful visitor. He flew to the door, opened it, and taking the boy by the hand, let him in. He was paler than usual, and the expression of his countenance denoted emotion and anxiety. As Ronayne cast his eye downwards he remarked that his left hand was bound round with a handkerchief of a light color, through which the blood was forcing its way.

"My God! Wau-nan-gee, is it possible?" he exclaimed, as he grasped him fervently by the opposite palm; "were you hurt by that shot fired just now?"

The Indian nodded his head affirmatively, as with an air of chagrin and disappointment, he said, "No good fire, Ronayne—Wau-nan-gee no mind him blood—Ingin Pee-to-tum hear gun fire—see Wau-nan-gee hand—know Wau-nan-gee visit fort."

Ronayne, seeing that the youth was mortified at the manner of his reception after the service he had rendered, explained to him fully the facts of the case. He, however, told him that he had spoken to the man who had fired at him under the idea of his being a spy, and that he might rely that nothing





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of the sort would happen on his return. Anxious to see the extent of the injury he had received, he untied the handkerchief, washed the wound, and found that the bullet had cut away the fleshy part of the palm just under the thumb, but without touching the bone. A little lint and diachylon plaster soon afforded a temporary remedy for this, and the whole having been covered with a light linen bandage, he gave the youth a half-worn pair of loose gauntlets to wear if he felt desirous to conceal the wound from the observation of his fellow warriors. This done, and his letter to his wife folded and given to the safe guardianship of the boy, with whom he made his final arrangements for a reunion as circumstances might render prudent and expedient, he finally drew him to his heart, and expressed in tones that could not fail to carry conviction of their truth as well as deep gratification to the generous heart of Wau-nan-gee the extent of his gratitude and friendship.

When the young Indian had departed, not before renewing his strong persuasion to induce the officer to accompany him to his wife, Ronayne, determining that no mistake should occur in the compliance of both his directions to Corporal Collins, once more ascended to the bastion from which he had soon the satisfaction to see Wau-nan-gee glide away in the direction of his encampment, until his figure was soon lost in the distance.

CHAPTER XX.

Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed which his aspiring rider seemed to know.

Richard II.

As if in mockery of the climax of trial they were to be made to undergo before its close, the 15th of August, 1812, dawned upon the inmates of Fort Dearborn with a brilliancy even surpassing that of the preceding day. Well do we, who chronicle these events, recollect it; for while the little garrison, in recording whose fate we take not less an interest than our readers can in the perusal, were preparing to march out of the fort—to abandon scenes and associations to which long habit had endeared them, and with the almost certainty of meeting death at every step, we stood at the battery which vomited destruction into the stronghold of him who had counselled and commanded the advance upon Fort Wayne. It has been a vulgar belief, fostered by his enemies, by those who were desirous of relieving themselves from the odium of participation, and of rising to power and consideration by the condemnation of their chief, that the position of General Hull was one fraught with advantage to himself and of disadvantage to his enemies. Nothing can be more incorrect. The batteries, to which we have alluded, had so completely attained the range of the Fort of Detroit, in the small area of which were cooped up a force of nearly twenty-five hundred men, that every shot that was fired told with terrible effect, and not less than three officers of the small regular force were killed or mutilated by one ball passing through the very heart of their private apartments, into which it had, as if searchingly and insidiously, found its way. To the left, moreover, was another floating battery of large ships of war, preparing to vomit forth their thunder, and distract the garrison and divide their fire, which could be re-

turned only from their immediate front bearing on the river, that it soon became evident to the besiegers that their enemy had no power to arrest or effectually check the fury of their attack. But not this alone. Thousands of Indians had occupied the ground in the rear, and only waited the advance of the British columns, furnished also with artillery for an assault in another quarter, to rush with the immolating tomahawk upon the defenceless inhabitants of the town, and complete a slaughter to which there would have been no parallel in warfare. They could not have been restrained; their savage appetite for blood must have been appeased, and of this fact General Hull had been apprised. Moreover, five hundred of his force who had been detached under Colonel Cass, were at no great distance, and had an effectual resistance been made at Detroit—had blood been, as they would have conceived, wantonly spilt, the exasperation of the Indians would have been such that, in all probability, Colonel Cass would not at the present day be a candidate for presidential honors, nor would any of his force have shared a better fate. All these things we state impartially and without fear of contradiction, because they occurred under our own eyes, and because we believe that the people of the United States do not understand the true difficulties by which General Hull was beset. It may be very well, and is correct enough in the abstract, to say that an officer commanding a post, armed and garrisoned as Detroit was, ought to have annihilated their assailants, but where, in the return of prisoners, is mention made of artillerymen sufficient to serve even half the guns by which the fortress was defended? The Fourth Regiment of the line was there, but not the gallant Fourth Artillery, and every soldier knows that that arm is often more injurious to friends than to foes in the hands of men not duly trained to it. With the exception only of the regiment first named, the army of General Hull consisted wholly of raw levies chiefly from Ohio, expert enough at the rifle, but utterly incompetent to serve artillery with effect. Again, the greater the number of men the greater the disadvantage, unless at the moment of assault, for it has already been shown that the British battering guns had obtained the correct range, and half the force had only canvas to cover them.

We pretend not, assume not, to be the panegyrist of General Hull, but we have ever been of opinion that, as he expressed himself in his official despatch to the commandant at Chicago, his principal anxiety was in regard to the defenceless inhabitants; and that had his been an isolated command, where men and soldiers only were the actors, no consideration would have induced him to lose sight of the order of the Secretary of War—that no post should be surrendered without a battle. If he erred it was from motives of humanity alone. But we return from our short digression to the little party in Fort Dearborn.

As we have before remarked, the sun rose on their immediate preparation for departure with a seemingly mocking brilliancy. None had been in bed from early dawn; and as both officers and men glanced, for the last time, from the ramparts upon the common, they saw assembled around nearly the whole of the Indians, with arms in their hands, and though not absolutely dressed in war dress, without any of those indications of warriors prepared for a long march, such as that meditated by the troops, while their tents still remained standing.

"The prospect is gloomy enough," remarked Captain Wells, gravely;

"those fellows have evidently been up all night and watching the fort from a distance, to see whether an attempt might not be made to 'steal a march' upon them in the dark—look yonder to the left, do you see that band crouching as the light becomes stronger behind these sand hills? Mark me well if that is not the point from which they will make their attack, if attack us they do! For myself, I am prepared for the worst; and in order that they shall know how much I mistrust them—nay, how certain I am of what they intend, I shall lead the advance with my brave warriors painted as black as the devil himself. And so to prepare ourselves."

"Corporal Nixon, pull me down that flag," ordered Ensign Ronayne, pointing to it, when the commanding officer had descended to give directions for the formation of the line of march—"that is my especial charge, and he who may take a fancy to it must win it with my life."

The corporal replied not. He was not aware of the true position of his young officer's lady, and he was afraid to give him pain by making allusion to her. He, however, promptly obeyed, and when the flag was lowered, and the lines cut away, assisted him in enfolding it somewhat in the fashion of a Scotch tartan round his body.

At the moment when the flag came down, the Indians on the common set up a tremendous yell. It was evidently that of triumph at the unmistakable evidence of the immediate evacuation of the fort.

The hot blood of Ronayne could not suffer this with impunity. At the full extent of his lungs he pealed back a yell of defiance, which attracted the general notice towards himself, standing erect as he did with the bright and brilliant colors of the silken flag flashing in the sun. Among those who were nearest to him was Pee-to-tum, over whose wounded eye had been drawn a colored handkerchief as a bandage. The Chippewa shook his tomahawk menacingly at him, and motioned as though he would represent the act of tearing the flag from his body.

The shout and its cause were heard and known below. Captain Headley returned to the rampart, and with much excitement in his manner and tone, inquired of the young officer what he meant by such imprudence of conduct at such a moment—when they were about to place themselves, almost defenceless, at the mercy of those whom he so wantonly provoked.

"It ill becomes you, sir," returned the Virginian, fiercely and sarcastically, "to talk to me of imprudence, who but follow your example of yesterday. Where was the prudence, I ask, which induced you to compromise not only your own life, but the lives of all, in spitting first, then dashing your glove into the face of the Chippewa?"

"If you dare to question the propriety of my conduct, sir," returned his commanding officer, "know that the act was provoked—unavoidable, if we would respect ourselves and command the respect of our enemies. Pee-to-tum had insulted the American people by contemptuously trampling under foot the medal that had been given to him by the President. Join your company, sir! What tomfoolery is that?" alluding to the manner in which the colors were disposed of. "Remove those colors!"

"That tomfoolery," returned Ronayne, his cheek paling with passion as he descended to the parade, "means that I know what you do not, Captain Headley—how to defend the colors intrusted to my care. I will not remove them."

"This fills the measure of your insolence, Mr. Ronayne," returned the commandant; "you will have a heavy account to settle by the time you reach Fort Wayne."

"The sooner the better; but if we do reach it, it will be from no merit of arrangement of yours," returned the subaltern, as he placed himself in his allotted station in the company.

It may and must appear not only surprising, but out of character to the reader, that such language should pass between two officers—and these unquestionably gentlemen—of the regular service—the one in command, the other filling the lowest grade of the commissioned service; but so it was. The high spirit of the Virginian had ever manifested deep impatience under what he considered to be the unnecessary martinetism of Capt. Headley, and there had always existed, from the moment of joining of the former, a disposition to run restive under his undue exercise of authority. This feeling had been greatly increased since the resolution taken by Capt. Headley to retreat after giving away the presents and ammunition to the Indians, not only because it was a most imprudent step, but because while the fort was maintained, there was the greater chance of his again being reunited, through the instrumentality of Wau-nan-gee, to his wife. Perhaps had he known the sincere sympathy which Capt. Headley entertained for him at the grief occasioned by her loss, or the knowledge he had obtained of her supposed guilt, which, notwithstanding all their little differences, he guarded with so much delicacy, this bitterness of feeling would have been much qualified; but he was ignorant of the fact, and only on one occasion, and for a moment as has been seen, suspected that Mrs. Headley had, under the seal of confidence and from a presumed necessity, betrayed his secret. If the history of that time did not record these frequent and strong expressions of dissatisfaction and discontent between the captain and the ensign, we should feel that we were violating consistency in detailing them; but they were so, and the only barrier to an open and more marked rupture existed in the person of Mrs. Headley, whom Ronayne loved and honored as though she had been his own mother, and who, on her part, often pleaded his generous warmth of temperament and more noble qualities of heart in mitigation of the annoyance and anger of her husband.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALL being now ready, the gates were thrown wide open for the last exit of the detachment, and the little column sallied forth. In the van rode Captain Wells and his little band of Miamis, whose lugubrious appearance likened the march much more to a funeral procession than to the movements of troops confident in themselves, and reposing faith in those whose services had been purchased. Next came thirty men of the detachment, and to them succeeded the wagons, containing, besides the women and children and sick, such stores of the garrison, including spare ammunition, with the luggage of the officers and men, as could not be dispensed with. Thirty men, composing the remaining subdivision of the healthy portion of the detachment, brought up the rear. Their route lay along the lake shore, while

the Indians moved in a parallel line with them, separated only by a long range of sandhills.

Both excellent horsewomen, and mounted on splendid chargers whose good points had for years been proved by them in their numerous rides in the neighborhood, Mrs. Headley and Mrs. Elmsley, with Ronayne on horseback, brought up the extreme rear. The former, habited in a riding dress which fitted admirably to her noble and graceful figure, was cool and collected as though her ride were one of mere ordinary parade. Deep thought there was in her countenance, it is true. Less than woman had she been had none been observable there; but of that unquiet manner which belongs to the nervous and the timid, there was no trace. She spoke to Mrs. Elmsley—who also manifested a firmness not common to a woman, to one under similar circumstances, but still of a less decided character than that of her companion—of indifferent subjects, expressing, among other things, her regret that they were then leaving for ever the wild but beautifully romantic country in which they had passed so many happy days. "How we shall amuse ourselves at Fort Wayne," she concluded, after one of those remarks, "heaven only knows; for although I spent a great part of my girlhood there, I confess it is the most dull station in which I have ever been quartered."

"How," remarked Ronayne, with an effort at gaiety his looks belied, "can the colors be better flanked than by two ladies who unite in themselves all the chivalrous courage of a Joan d'Arc and a Jeanne d'Amboise. Really, my dear Mrs. Headley," glancing at the black morocco belt girt around her waist, and from which protruded the handles of two pistols about eight inches in length, "I would advise no Pottowatomic to approach too near you to-day."

"I think I may safely second your recommendation, Ronayne," she answered, as uncovering the front of her saddle she exhibited a short rifle which her riding habit concealed, "or they may find that my life has not been passed in the backwoods, without some little practical knowledge of the use of arms. When we were first married at Fort Wayne, Headley taught me to fire the pistol and the rifle with equal adroitness, and I have not forgotten my practice."

"And I," said Mrs. Elmsley, "though less formidably provided, have that which may serve me in an emergency—see here," and she drew from the bosom of her riding dress a double-barrelled pistol, somewhat smaller than those of Mrs. Headley.

"Well provided, both of you," said the Virginian, "and I was correct in saying that the color and the color-bearer were well guarded, but hark! what is that!"

Several shots were fired. They were discharged by the Indians, wantonly destroying the cattle browsing around the road by which they advanced.

"Such will be our fate," exclaimed the officer with the excitement of indignation; "shot down, no doubt, like so many brutes."

At that moment Captain Headley galloped up from the rear, he having been the last to leave the fort. Ronayne's words were overheard by him, and he demanded, hastily and abruptly:

"Are you afraid, sir? You seem well protected."

"Sir!" thundered the ensign, "I can march up to the enemy where you dare not show your face."

And, apologizing hurriedly to the ladies, he dashed the spurs furiously into his horse's flanks and followed his captain, who had hastened to the front.

As the latter gained the head of the column which was only rendered of any length by the dozen bullock wagons containing the stores and luggage, he saw Capt. Wells, who was about a hundred yards in the advance, suddenly wheel round with his Miamis, and push rapidly back for the main body.

"They are preparing to attack us, sir," he shouted. "There is not a moment to be lost in making your arrangements."

Scarcely had these words been uttered, when a volley came rattling across the sandhill from the level of the prairie, wounding, but not disabling, two of his men.

"We must charge them," he answered, "it is our only hope. Keep them 'n check, Wells, while I form me. Now, my lads, it is death or victory for us. Baggage wagons halt, and form hollow square, to shelter the women and children from the bullets of the enemy. Rear subdivision, to the front! Right subdivision, halt!"

"Left subdivision, halt!" ordered Lieutenant Elmsley, when they had come up.

"Front!" pursued the captain, and the line was formed. "Men, throw off your packs—you must have nothing to encumber you in that sand; the drivers will carry them into the square. Ladies, you had better retire there too."

"To a soldier's wife the field of battle were preferable on a day like this," calmly returned Mrs. Headley, who, with Mrs. Elmsley, had ridden up with the rear. "Better to be shot down there than tomahawked near the wagons. Besides our presence will encourage the men—will it not, my lads?"

A loud cheer burst from the ranks. Each man, certainly, felt greater confidence than before.

"Then forward, charge!" shouted Capt. Headley, availing himself of this moment of enthusiasm; "recollect, you fight for your wives and children; if you drive not the Indians, they perish!"

"Nay, forget not, you fight for your colors!" cried Ronayne, galloping furiously through the sand to the front, and heading the centre.

The ascent was not very steep, and as the colors, tightly girt over the shoulders of Ronayne and hanging from the flanks of his horse, first appeared crowning the crest, and then the little serried line of bayonets glittering like so many streams of light in the sun's rays, exclamations of wonder, mingled with fierce shouts, burst from the Indians, who up to this moment had, after their first volley, been wholly occupied by Captain Wells and his party of horsemen, whom they seemed more anxious to make prisoners than to fire at, and this in consideration of their horses, which they were anxious to obtain unwounded.

"Wells," shouted Captain Headley, on whose little line the Indians now began to open their fire, "send half your people to protect my right flank. Charge, men! It is all down hill work now, and we are fairly in for it. If we are to die, let us die like men."

Simultaneously, and without the order, the men shouted the charge on, with their commanding officer and the colors full in view before them, they dashed forward where their enemies were the thickest, and such was the effect of their unswerving courage that the latter, although in numbers sufficient to have annihilated them, were awed by their resolution; and in many instances, those who were not in the immediate line of their advance, stood leaning on their guns watching them and without firing a shot; nor was this strange, for it must be recollected that the hostile feeling to the garrison had not been shared by all the Pottowatomies, especially by the chiefs and more elderly warriors.

Before the determined advance of the gallant little band the Indians gave way, until they had retired again nearly as far as their own encampment, but the ranks were fast thinning by the distant fire of the enemy, whom it was found impossible to reach with the bayonet.

"This will never do," thundered Capt. Headley; "halt! form square!"

The order was speedily obeyed; but on hearing firing behind and looking round for his wife and Mrs. Elmsley, to place them in the centre. Captain Headley saw that a great number of the Indians whom they had met before them had turned aside and reunited behind—thus cutting them off from their party. It has already been observed that the horse Mrs. Headley rode was a magnificent animal, docile yet full of life and spirit, and the excitement and sound of battle had, on this occasion, given to him an animation—a grace, if it may be so expressed, which rendered even more remarkable by the superb figure of his rider, excited in several of the Indians a strong desire to get possession of him uninjured. Her own scalp they were burning with eagerness to secure; for from the first moment of the charge down the hill, she had used her little ride so successfully that of three Indians hit by her two had been killed, and they had evinced their deep exasperation. The anxiety to extricate herself, without the horse being wounded, in all probability saved her; for they fired so high that almost all the bullets passed over her head, although not less than seven did reach their aim—one of them lodging in her left arm. The Indians were now pressing more closely upon her, when Captain Wells, seeing the danger to which the noble woman was exposed, dashed back at the head of his brave horse, and used the tomahawk with such effect without the enemy being able to guard themselves against the rapidity of his movements, that he soon cleared a passage to her, cleft the skull of a Pottowatomic who had reached her side, and was in the very act of removing her riding hat to scalp her alive, and lifting her off her horse, covered with wounds and faint from loss of blood, bore her rapidly down towards the lake. As he approached it, he met Winnebago and Black Partridge returning to the scene of blood, to save her if possible, as they had previously saved Mrs. Elmsley, who had had her horse shot under her, and been wounded in the ankle. Both were hurried into a canoe, and concealed under blankets by those good but now powerless chiefs, while the brave but desperate captain returned to head his warriors and try the last issue of the fight.

Meanwhile, Captain Headley had been again attacked and with great fury by the rallying Indians, while the only diversion in his favor was that made by the little band of Miamis, who, however, could not be expected to render efficient aid much longer; besides, whatever immediate advantage might be

gained, the final result when the darkness of night should set in, was but too certain. Not only his officers and himself, but his men felt this, and they could scarcely be said to regret it, when, surrounding them from a distance, the Indians renewed a fire which, from the moment of their first being thrown into square, had in a great degree been lulled. During that short interval they had been made to moisten their parched lips from their canteens of water into which had been thrown a small quantity of rum at starting, and no one who has ever donned the buckler need be told the exhilarating, the renewing influence of this upon men jaded with long previous watching and fighting at disadvantage.

"Men, husband your ammunition," enjoined the captain, "keep cool, and when I give the word, level low and deliberately. Our position cannot be better, for the country is all clear and flat around us. God defend the right."

"Commence file-firing from the right of faces," he ordered, as he remarked that the Indians, rendered bolder by his inactivity, were evidently closing upon him, as for the purpose of a rush.

Steadily and coolly the men pulled the trigger for the first time; and the effect of the caution he had given was perceptible. The Indians were no less galled than astonished when turning from one face to get out of the way of danger, they found the bullets coming upon them from every point of the compass—not very many, it is true, but quite enough to stay and to warn them that a nearer approach was dangerous; and before the little band had discharged a dozen cartridges each—few failing to tell—they had withdrawn entirely out of reach of danger either to themselves or to their enemies.

While thus they stood, as it were, at bay, they for the first time had leisure to look around and observe the havoc that had been done along the slope of the sandhill and on the plain below. Nearly half of their gallant comrades lay there scalped and tomahawked, and with their bodies and limbs thrown into those strange contortions which mark the last physical agony of the soldier struck down by the bullet in the midst of life and health; but for every private lay two Indians at least—a few of them who had been overtaken in the furious charge down the hill, but most of them sufferers from their fire while formed in their little but compact square. Capt. Headley and his lieutenant looked anxiously, but silently, towards the sand hill, where they had last seen their wives exposed to the most imminent danger, yet gallantly defended by Captain Wells and his Miami warriors, three of whose horses, shot under them, encumbered the ground, but nothing was to be seen of either; and the bitterness of sorrow was in their hearts, for they believed them to be dead, and that their bodies were lying beyond the crest of the hill, whence occasional shouts were heard. As for Ronayne, he kept his eye fixed in the opposite direction, for they were not far from the encampment of the Pottowatomies, and he felt satisfied that his beloved Maria, who, after the great peril to which he had fears Mrs. Headley and Mrs. Elmsley were exposed, he deeply rejoiced to know was in a place of safety, was then not far from him, and no doubt forcibly detained from the field by the mother of Wau-nan-gee, or by the youth himself.

"'Twere folly to remain here longer and thus inactive," remarked Captain Headley. "The Indians are evidently waiting for night to renew their

attack, for they are sensible that, as few of them are provided with rifles, our muskets have greatly the advantage of range. Hark! do you hear the yells and shouting of the hell-hounds in the fort? It is well for us that nearly half their force has been attracted thither by the thirst of plunder and the hope of obtaining rum. But let us resume our position on the hill. Now that we shall be enabled to command every thing around us, if we are to die let us fall together like men and soldiers in our little serried square."

"Long live our brave captain!—huzza! We will fight to the last cart-ridge, and bayonet in hand," exclaimed Paul Desorme, raising his cap excitedly.

The cheer was taken up and prolonged until the forest that bounded the places they were in sent back the echo.

Scarcely had this subsided, when terrific shrieks and cries, mingled with fierce yells, burst from the opposite side of the sandhill. This lasted for about five minutes, and then gradually died away. Then many straggling shots were heard, and these died away in distance.

Captain Headley, who had deferred his movement towards the sandhill during this manifestation of the presence of the enemy on the other side of the ridge, now moved his men to its base, and there halted them. After a little time, ordering a rush with the bayonet on the first Indians who should show themselves in any force, he stepped out of the square, and moved in a stooping posture to gain the summit, that he might reconnoitre the enemy and see what they were about. But scarcely had he reached the top when he again rapidly descended. His face was pale—his lips compressed. He had seen a sight to shake the nerves of the sternest soldier, and gladly did he swallow, from the canteen of Sergeant Nixon, who offered it to him, the cordial beverage that carried renewed circulation to his veins.

"Forward, men, with as little noise as possible, and gain the crest of the hill; but, whatever you see, let not your nerves be shaken into indiscretion. If you fire without orders from me, you are lost without a hope. Be cool, and when I do give the command to fire, let the front face of the square exchange their discharged firelocks for those of the rear face, in order to be always loaded. Now, men, be cool."

Captain Headley was wise in issuing this precautionary order, for the sight the little square beheld, on gaining and halting on the ridge, was one not merely to render men reckless and imprudent, but in a great measure to drive them mad.

CHAPTER XXII.

A crimson river of warm blood like to a bubbling fountain stirr'd with wind.
Titus Andronicus.

To understand the horrible scene that met the view, first of the commanding officer, and subsequently of the little square, it will be necessary to go back to certain events of the past half hour.

When Captain Wells had returned from delivering over his wounded niece to the charge of Black Partridge and Winnebago, both of whom had, with deep sorrow, beheld the fiendish excesses of their young men, but with-

out being able to prevent them, he was pursuing his way across the sandhill to the assistance of Captain Headley. Suddenly, while looking around to find out in what part of the field his Minnis were, he saw several Pottowatomies approach the spot where the baggage wagons were drawn up, and commence tomahawking the children. The cries and shrieks of the mothers, as the helpless victims perished one after the other, under their eyes, until nearly a dozen had fallen, brought with it all the renewal of the horror he ever experienced when women and children were thus assailed, and drove him almost frantic.

"Is that your game?" he exclaimed furiously in their own language:—"thank God, we can play at that too."

The attempt to check the strong party assembled round the wagons, he felt would be unavailing, but resolving to venture, single-handed, into the encampment of the enemy, where their children had been left unguarded, he turned his horse's head, dashed past the fort again at his fullest speed, and with revenge and a threat of retaliation racking his very heart strings, made for their wigwams. Alarmed, in turn, for the safety of their squaws and children, the murderers now desisted from their work and followed as rapidly as they could on foot, the flight of the Miami leader. Every now and then they stopped and fired, but at the outset all their shots were in vain, for the captain, accustomed to that sort of warfare, throwing himself along the neck of his horse, loading and firing in that position, baffled all their attempts to bring him down, while he waved his tomahawk on high, as if in triumph at the successful issue of what he meditated. As the pursuit of the Indians passed the gate of the fort, now filled with plunderers, many intoxicated, Pee-to-tum, who had been there from the first—his love of drink being even stronger than his thirst for revenge—came staggering forth, suddenly aroused to a consciousness of what was going on without, and demanded to know the cause of this new and immediate tumult. The young Indians hastily informed him; when the Chippewa, dropping on one knee, and holding his ramrod as a rest upon the ground, ran his right and uninjured eye along the sight, pulled the trigger, and brought down the horse of the fugitive, which fell with a heavy plunge. A tremendous shout followed from the band who had lost four warriors by his fire, and who, consequently deeply enraged, now made the greatest efforts to come up with and secure him. Before he could disengage himself from his horse, under which he lay severely wounded himself, two other Indians came up from an opposite quarter, and, taking him prisoner, sought to bear him off before the others could reach him. These were the chiefs Waubesa and Winnebago, the latter of whom, seeing the danger of the captain from the moment when the massacre of the children commenced, had left Mrs. Headley and Mrs. Elmsley under the care of Black Partridge, and hastened to be of service to him if possible. But all their efforts to save him were vain. With rapid strides, and shouts rendered more savage than ever by the fumes of the liquor he had swallowed, and with the scalp of the unfortunate Von Voltenberg—who had been killed while returning to the fort for a small flask of brandy which he had forgotten—dangling at his side, Pee-to-tum advanced with furious speed, and, stabbing the captain in the back, put an end to his misery. No sooner had he fallen, than, like a vulture, the Chippewa sprang upon the lifeless body, and, making an incision with his knife upon the strong and

full-haired crown, tore the reeking covering away, and thus added another trophy to his disgusting spoils. This was the signal for further outrage. Exasperated by the knowledge of the revenge he had meditated, and the loss he had already occasioned them, the warriors who had first followed the ill-fated Miami leader, cut open the left side with their knives, and tore forth the wet warm and bleeding heart, which, as well as the body itself, they bore back in triumph to the very spot whence they had set out. Pee-to-tum carrying his heart, pierced by the ramrod, as it protruded a couple of feet from the barrel of his rifle.

Squatting in a circle, and within a few feet of the wagon in which the tomahawked children lay covered with blood, and fast stiffening in the coldness of death, now sat about twenty Indians, with Pee-to-tum at their head, passing from hand to hand the quivering heart of the slain man, whose eyes, straining, as it were, from their sockets, seemed to watch the horrid repast in which they were indulging, while the blood streamed disgustingly over their chins and lips, and trickled over their persons. So many wolves or tigers could not have torn away more voraciously with their teeth, or smacked their lips with greater delight in the relish of human food, than did these loushame creatures, who now moistened the nauseous repast from a black bottle of rum which had been found in one of the wagons containing the medicine for the sick—and what gave additional disgust was the hideous aspect of the inflamed eye of the Chippewa, from which the bandage had fallen off, and from which the heat of the sun's rays was fast drawing a briny, ropy, and copious discharge, resembling rather the grey and slimy mucus of the toad than the tears of a human being.

At the moment when the little square thus reappeared unexpectedly before them, the revellers, who had supposed them either in the hollow colored, or long since disposed of by their comrades, were almost instantly sobered and on their feet. Quickly they flew to secure their guns, which lay at a little distance behind them; but, before they could reach them, a volley from the front face of the square was poured in with an effect which, at that short distance, could not fail to prove destructive; and of the twenty Indians who had composed the circle, more than a dozen of them fell dead, or so desperately wounded, that they could not crawl off the ground.

"Good, men!" shudderingly remarked Capt. Headley, "we have revenged this slaughter at least. Cease firing. Pull not another trigger until I order you. If there be a hope left for us, it must depend wholly upon our coolness. What a pity you missed that scoundrel Pee-to-tum. Hark, Elmsley, do you hear his brutal voice calling upon the Indians to renew the attack?"—and then in a lower tone to the same officer: "What can have become of our wives? Yonder rides a Pottowatomic mounted on Mrs. Headley's charger. I pray God they may not have made them prisoners!"

"Heaven grant it may be so, sir!" solemnly returned his subaltern; "but, in their present exasperated state, I fear the worst. Why, while we were in the hollow, I distinctly saw Mrs. Headley bring down two Indians with her rifle. They would not easily forget that."

"And I, sir," said Sergeant Nixon deferentially, as if fearing to intrude, "saw Mrs. Elmsley's horse shot under her; and when an Indian came up and struggled with her, she threw her arm around his neck, and presented and fired a pistol at him, and then tried to get at his scalping knife which

was suspended over his chest. What the result was, I could not make out; but the last I saw of her, she was seized by another Indian and carried in his arms across the very spot where we now stand. See, sir, that is her horse!" and he pointed to the animal, which lay only a few feet from the square, and which, among the dead bodies of soldiers, Pottowatomies, and Miami, had hitherto escaped their attention.

"See, sir, they are collecting in great force near the gate," observed the lieutenant—"I can distinctly see Pee-to-tum, who has joined them, motioning with his hand to advance."

"Then is this the best position we could have chosen," returned Captain Hendley: "courage, men! A taste of biscuit from your haversacks while you have time, a teaspoonful of rum, and then we must at it again. Mind, above all things, that you keep cool, and do not fire a shot without orders."

From the moment that Romney had placed himself, with the colors, at the head of the little party when advancing up the sandhill, he had not spoken a word, but continued to gaze fixedly and abstractedly upon that part of the plain or prairie which led to the inner encampment of the Indians. His whole thought—his undivided attention was given to his wife, whose anxiety, nay, anguish, at hearing the sounds of conflict which denoted his imminent peril, he knew must be intense. True, he himself was spared the anxiety and uncertainty which filled the breasts of his comrades on seeing those they loved best on earth exposed to all the fearful chances of battle, but even in that there was an excitement which in some degree compensated for the risks they ran. The very fact of their presence had sustained them; but now that the final result seemed no longer doubtful, and that the annihilation of the whole party was to be momentarily expected, he felt that one last look, one last embrace of her he loved, would rob death of half its horrors. But this was but the momentary selfishness of the man. When Mrs. Hendley and Mrs. Elmley were known to have disappeared, he more than ever rejoiced in the circumstances which had removed his beloved wife from the horrors of the day, and placed her under so faithful a guardianship as that of the generous Wau-nan-goo.

But there was another reason for the calm, the serious silence which the Virginian had preserved. Independently of theaching interest he took in all that he supposed to be passing at that moment in the mind of his absent wife, he had been deeply galled by the last insulting remark of Captain Hendley, to which he had, it is true, replied in a similar spirit, yet which nevertheless had continued to give him much annoyance. His duty as bearer of the colors being rather passive than active, he had not found it necessary to open his lips, except to utter a few words of encouragement and approval to the men. Formed in hollow square, as the little force now was, there was no opportunity for display of individual or personal prowess, or he certainly would have sought an opportunity to test with his commanding officer the extent of their respective daring. But now an occasion at last presented itself, and in a manner least expected.

CHAPTER XXIII.

FROM the position now occupied by the devoted little band, a view of

the whole adjacent country was distinctly commanded, even to the very gates of the fort, from which they had never advanced more than half a mile on their retreat, and within a mile of which their movements had again brought them. On looking anxiously around to see from what direction the most imminent danger would proceed, Captain Headley remarked a large body of Indians issuing from the gateway, and moving slowly from the fort towards them.

"Give me the glass, Mr. Elmsley," he said to that officer, who had it slung over his shoulder, "let me see if I can make out what they intend. Ha! by heaven they are moving one of the field pieces towards us. Could they but manage a few rounds of that, they would soon make short work of the affair, but the simpletons seem to have overlooked the fact of the gun being spiked—even if they knew how to aim it."

"If it is the gun that was in the block-house, it is not spiked, sir," remarked Sergeant Nixon.

"Not spiked! how is that?" asked the captain quickly—almost angrily.

"The spikes were too large, sir; and Weston, whose duty it was, broke a ramrod off instead."

"Ha! is it so? What a thought strikes me! Could we get hold of that gun, we might yet make terms with those devils. Who will lead a forlorn hope and volunteer to take it?"

"I will," thundered Ronayne, with sudden vivacity, his eye flashing fiercely as he met the glance of his commanding officer. "Spare me three men from each face of the square, and I will bring it to you or die in the attempt." The captain colored and looked annoyed with himself.

"One moment, Mr. Ronayne. Have we the means of removing the broken ramrod if we should get the gun? Where is the armorer?"

"I have them, sir," returned the man. "I thought a drill and a hammer would be useful on the march, and so I put them in my pack."

"Pish! there is another difficulty. Your pack is as difficult to reach as the gun. It is in the wagon, is it not?"

"Yes, sir, and the hammer in it, but I have the spike thrust through a piece of beef in my haversack."

"All right. There are stones enough around to supply the absence of a hammer."

"Volunteers to the front!" said Ronayne, in a low, firm tone, and with compressed lip. "What Hardscrabble men will follow me?"

Simultaneously, Sergeant Nixon, Corporals Collins and Green; Phillips, Watson, Weston, and Degarmo, stepped forth, with several others, anxious to be of the party, until the number was made up, and again the diminished square closed upon its centre.

"Not yet," cried Captain Headley, who, having once more applied the glass to his eye, was closely watching the movements of the Indian mass. "Nothing must be left to mere chance. Mr. Elmsley, what is the position of the wagon which contains the ammunition?"

"It was the leading one, sir," returned the officer addressed. "What alteration has been made in the act of throwing them into square, I cannot possibly tell."

"See, is not that it?" asked the commanding officer, pointing to one from the top of which several casks protruded.

"It is," was the reply.

"Then, Mr. Ronayne, first load your party to the wagons and let each man load himself from the keg of ball cartridge, and as many grenades as he can carry—these must supply the place of larger shot, if we get the gun. Lose no time. There is not an Indian on that side of the sandhill now, and you will easily accomplish your object. Sampson," addressing the armorer, "you may as well avail yourself of the opportunity to get your heavy hammer. The stones about here are brittle, and may break."

In little more than five minutes, this first part of their duty was accomplished, although under circumstances far more painful and repugnant than the more dangerous one in reserve. On their way to the wagons they were compelled to pass close to the scalped and disembowelled body of the brave but unfortunate Wells, whose still bleeding heart, only half eaten, was encrusted with sand, and bore the ragged impress of teeth driven furiously and voraciously into it. On their arrival near the wagons, their nerves were further tried by the horrible and disgusting spectacle of the slain children, whose scalped heads and mutilated remains gave unmistakable evidence of the fate that awaited themselves unless Providence should interpose a miracle in their favor, while their ears were assailed by the stifled groans and sobbings of mothers who had covered their heads up with blankets and sheets, not only with a view to shut out the appalling sight of their murdered offspring, but to seek exemption from a similar fate. So confused was the perception of those poor, unhappy creatures, that they could not identify either the voices or the language of those who were now near them—some, the fathers of the innocents they mourned—but believed them to be Pottowatomies, and it was not until they had departed, and were out of sight, that they ventured again to uncover their heads, and breathe a pure air.

By the time the party returned, and had deposited within the square the keg of ball cartridges, and some fifty hand grenades, the Indians in great numbers had brought the three pounder, which was now made out to be the calibre of the gun, to the very spot where Capt. Headley had first formed the square, and just without the present range of the heavy muskets of the men. There was a great deal of clamor and hustle about the manner of manœuvring the piece, and with the aid of the glass it could be distinctly seen that they once or twice applied a burning torch to the breech, for, when this was done, the Indians grouped around retired quickly from its neighborhood, but, on finding it did not explode, seemed for the first time to be sensible of the cause, and again gathered near it.

"Now, Mr. Ronayne, is your time," said Capt. Headley to the young officer, whose volunteers, twelve in number, with a hand grenade in each haversack, and a second in his right hand, now stood ready, with their muskets at the trail, to ignite the port fire, and descend upon the formidable mass below them. "Sampson, the moment you reach the gun, drive in the spike, and turn the muzzle towards the thickest of the enemy. Every bullet will, doubtless, tell. The discharge will throw them into confusion, and enable you, Mr. Ronayne, to retire under the cover of our musketry. The gun once here, and we may change the fortune of the day. Are your port fires all lighted? Forward, then!"

And down in silence dashed the little party into the midst of their ene-

mies. Takencom pletely by surprise, and dismayed at the sight of the hissing port fire, which they did not comprehend, the Indians at first drew back and opened a running fire from their inferior guns, but seeing how small was the number of their assailants, they again advanced and waited for their nearer approach, determined apparently to save their powder and make the tomahawk alone perform its work. Suddenly, Ronayne, who had dismounted on the hill, halted within twenty paces of the spot, and with his men at extended order. The Indians dared not to provoke a hand-to-hand encounter, for that would have brought them within the range of the muskets they saw levelled above. This was a most critical and anxious moment to the young officer. He had descended the hill too rapidly for the port fire to be sufficiently consumed for ignition of the shells generally, and for nearly a minute they stood thus, their muskets still at the trail, and at every moment expecting the Indians to make a final spring upon them.

At length, after the lapse of a few seconds, which seemed ages, the fire rapidly approached the iron.

"Now, my lads," shouted the Virginian, "throw them in lustily."

A loud cheer burst from the lips of each, as, after having hurled the missiles of death into the dense groups of the astonished savages, they followed up the advantage created by the confusion of the bursting shells, by a rush upon the gun, the drag-ropes of which were seized amid many distant shots, and so effectually used that, before the former could recover from their panic, the piece was withdrawn under cover of the fire from the square, and its muzzle turned to the enemy.

A second loud and triumphant cheer followed from the hill, and the strong voice of Captain Headley could be distinctly heard when it had ceased.

"Quick, quick, Mr. Ronayne; there is another strong band approaching the wood on your left. The work is but half done."

"Light your second grenades," ordered Ronayne. "The sight of the burning port fires will keep them in check. Sampson, will you never have finished with the gun? what are you fumbling about that you do not drive in the ramrod?"

But the man spake not; he reclined motionless over the breech of the field piece. The next moment the brazen plated cap fell from his head, and a white forehead was exhibited, with a slight incrustation of blood on the temple showing where the fatal rifle ball had entered.

"Ha! dead!" exclaimed Ronayne, excitedly, as he caught the man by the collar and gently lowered him to the ground. "I must then perform your duty."

He caught up the drill and the heavy hammer which the stiffening armorer had dropped, and so well and powerfully did he use it, that after a few blows the end of the ramrod, broken short off at the touch-hole, fell into the body of the gun, and the vent-hole was clear.

"All right," he exclaimed; "quick, Collins, a couple of cartridges to prime with."

In another moment the gun was ready. The officer passed his eye along the sight, and saw that the muzzle pointed fully at the large body that was approaching a small patch of brushwood to take him in flank.

"The moment I fire," he ordered, "throw in your second grenades, seize

the drag-ropes and retire with all speed with the gun. I see the fuses are nearly burnt out; this is rather a short one for my purpose, Collins, but it must answer."

Stepping to the right side of the gun, he held forth the grenade with his left hand, and applied the port fire to the touch-hole. There was a fizz of a few seconds, and then the gun went off with a loud explosion, and a fierce recoil. Yells and shrieks rent the air, and in a moment the whole of the new band were scampering away in full flight, leaving behind them some five-and-twenty of their party killed and disabled by the discharge of the piece, loaded, as has been seen, with musket bullets.

Profiting by the consternation into which this murderous fire had thrown the whole body of Pottowatomies, the men pealed forth another cheer even louder than the first, hurled forward their grenades, not yet ready for explosion, as far as they could throw them, and seizing the drag-ropes, ran fleetly with it towards the hill.

Stricken with disappointment, the Indians lost sight of their usual caution, and rushed furiously forward to recover the gun, which, however, being now discharged, was of no actual use to them.

"Leave the gun where it is, and bring off your officer," shouted Captain Headley in a clear voice. "See you not that he is wounded, and the Indians advancing to dispatch him?"

This was the first intimation the men had of the fact. In their anxiety to secure the gun, they had not observed that Ronayne, hit by a rifle bullet while in the very act of firing his piece, had been brought to the ground with a broken leg, and rendered unable to follow them. But, no sooner had Captain Headley uttered the order than all hastened back to the spot where the Virginian reclined on one side, with the musket of the armorer tightly grasped, and his look still bent upon the distant forest.

Just as they had reached, and were preparing to lift him up, the Indians again rushed forward to dispute his possession. They were within twenty paces, and brandishing their tomahawks triumphantly, when, suddenly, and one after another, burst in the midst of them, the grenades which had been hurled prematurely on the discharge of the field piece; and striking panic into their body, caused them once more hurriedly to retire.

But this check was only momentary. Rendered reckless at every moment from the liquor which all had more or less imbibed at different periods of the battle, and ashamed that they should be kept at bay by so mere a handful of men, the dark mass now fiercely closed upon the little party that bore off the wounded officer, and commenced their attack.

Meanwhile, Captain Headley, seeing this resolute forward movement of the Indians, and anticipating the certain destruction of the whole, moved his little square rapidly towards the gun, causing his men to take with them the ammunition which had been collected there, and soon the piece was again loaded and turned to his front. But it was found impossible to discharge the gun without endangering the lives of his own men more than those even of the enemy, for the Indians in immediate pursuit kept themselves so cautiously in the rear of the former, that, in the position he then occupied, it was impossible to reach them alone. The only movement that could save them was a rapid change of ground, so as to enable him to take the enemy in flank, and of this he hastened to avail himself by again occupying the

sandhill. This was done; but in the short time taken to effect the movement, the bloodhounds had too well profited by their advantage.

At the head of the pursuers was the Chippewa, Pee-to-tum. His voice had been loudest in the war whoop, as his foot had been the most forward in the advance; and his denunciations of the dog Headley, as he called him, were bitter, and he called loudly for him that he might kill him with his tomahawk.

"Save yourselves, men, and leave me to my fate," exclaimed the Virginian, as he heard the voice of the Chippewa almost in his ear. "Nixon, remove the colors from my shoulders and take them into the square. I shall not die happy until I know them to be secure."

"Nay, sir," said the non-commissioned officer, "we will not, cannot desert you; and, if we would, it is now out of our power—we are too closely pressed—we must fight to the last."

"Then drop me, and turn and fight. Let us not be struck down like dastards, with our backs to the enemy. Where is that musket?"

"Here it is, sir," said the serjeant; "but in your present disabled state you cannot make use of it."

"At least I will try," returned the Virginian. "If I could but slay the black-souled Pee-to-tum, I should revenge the treachery of this day, and perhaps be the means of saving the remnant of our brave fellows."

"Oh!" gasped Nixon, as he fell suddenly dead upon the body of his wounded officer. He had been shot through the back and under the left rib. A fierce yell followed, and Ronayne beheld the hellish face of the Chippewa, looking more disgusting than ever in the loss of his left eye, as, with shining blade, he bounded forward to take the scalp of his victim.

The body of the serjeant lay across his shattered leg, and not only gave him great anguish, but impeded his action, faint, moreover, as he was from loss of blood from several subsequent wounds received during his transit from the spot where he first had fallen. But the opportunity of avenging his wife, himself, and his slaughtered companions—the latter all murdered at his instigation—was one that would never occur again, and all his energies were aroused. Even while the half-drunken savage was in the act of taking the scalp of the unfortunate Nixon, Ronayne removed the bayonet from the musket, and grasping it with all the fierce determination of hatred, drove the sharp long instrument with such force through his exposed body, that not only the point protruded several inches on the opposite side, but the inner edge of the socket itself cut deeply into the flesh.

Absolutely roaring with pain, the Chippewa left his bloody work unfinished. The knife fell from his grasp. He sprang to his feet, and having at once seen by whose hand the blow had been inflicted, a sudden thought appeared to occur to him. Down again he threw himself furiously upon the body of the wounded officer, who, anticipating the act, had by this time armed himself with the knife that lay with its handle on the ground and the trickling blade across the down-turned cheek of the serjeant. He sought to encircle him in his death grip, but, in falling, the handle of the bayonet had struck the ground, driving the weapon even deeper in, and thus adding to his torture. But the greater his suffering, the more desperate became his thirst for revenge. He now managed to throw his arms round the neck of the Virginian, and said something in broken English, which, accompanied as

his language was by a fiendish laugh rendering his countenance more hideous than ever, caused the latter to make the most furious endeavor to release himself, while with his right and disengaged hand he struck blindly with his knife at the uncovered throat of the Indian. But the weapon was soon wrested from his enfeebled hands, and the Chippewa, dexterously turning himself so as to get the body of his enemy completely under him, now tried to scalp him alive. Weak as he was, the young officer did not lose sight of his presence of mind. Scarcely had the scalping knife touched his head, when it was again withdrawn with the most horrible contortions of the whole body of the Chippewa. Fixing his eye on the Indian's face above that he might feast on the agony of the wretch who had just avowed himself to be the violator of his wife, while threatening a repetition of the outrage when the battle should be over, the Virginian had seized the handle of the bayonet, and turned the weapon so furiously in the wound as to cause one general laceration, the agony arising from which could only be comprehended from the spasmodic movements and wild bellowings of the savage. In order to free himself from the torture he was too much distracted by pain to think of removing by the instant death of his enemy, the Chippewa sprang suddenly upwards, but this movement only tended to increase the torments under which he writhed, for, as the Virginian held the handle firmly in his grasp, the bayonet was half withdrawn, and the sharp point forced, by the down-hanging weight of the socket, into a new direction. Wild with revenge and pain, he was at length in the act of raising his tomahawk to dispatch the Virginian, who had abandoned his hold of the bayonet, when a shot came from the front of the square, and Pee-to-tum fell dead across the bodies of both his immediate victims. Singular to say, the ball, aimed by Captain Headley himself at the upper part of his person, and during the only period when the Indians could be reached without danger to some one or other of the men, entered his brain over his injured eye, and forced out the other.

The fall of the detested Chippewa—the head and stay of their battle—seemed greatly to dispirit the Pottowatomies, a band of about fifty of whom had followed them in this fierce onset. Of that number, some fifteen had perished, both in the hand-to-hand encounter with the immediate followers of Romayne and several shots from the square. On the other hand, but four of the volunteers remained—Corporal Collins, Phillips, Weston, and Degarmo—the latter severely wounded. All the others had fallen, and, with the exception of Serjeant Nixon, been scalped.

A cessation of the contest now ensued, and the Indians, holding up what was intended to be a flag of truce, asked permission to carry off the body of the Chippewa. Sensible how impolitic it would be to exasperate them without necessity, Captain Headley granted their request, adding that now the bad man who counselled them had been stricken down by the anger of the Great Spirit, he hoped they would come to their senses and obey their legitimate chiefs.

A low murmuring among themselves was the only reply, as they placed the body in a blanket, drew the bayonet from the wound, from which followed a copious dark stream, and leisurely proceeded with their burden and the scalps they had secured to rejoin another body of their tribe who had been watching them in the distance, and who now rapidly advanced to meet

them, evidently anxious to know why they returned unmolested, and what tidings they brought.

Advantage was taken of this cessation of combat to bring back what remained of the gallant little band of volunteers within the square. The dead were left to moisten the sands on which they had so bravely fallen. Ro-nayne still lived, but he could not be removed. The slightest motion of his body brought with it agony little less excruciating than that which his enemy had experienced. He knew he must die, and he begged Captain Headley to let him perish where he was, under the shadow of the guns of his comrades, and in full sight of the forest which he knew contained all that he loved on earth. What he asked to be spared to him was a cloak to shield him from the burning heat of the sand, and a little water to moisten his parched lips. Oh! what would he not have given for a draught of the cool claret of the dinner of yesterday!

CHAPTER XXIV.

He that comforts my wife is the cherisher of my flesh and blood.—*Alta Well.*

What nearer debt in all humanity, than wife is to the husband.—*Troilus and Cressida.*

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and a burning sun threw its strong rays upon the sandhill where stood prepared, for whatever further emergency might occur, the little band of American soldiers now reduced to less than one half of their original number. The acquisition of the three-pounder had greatly encouraged them for the moment, but, during the inaction that succeeded to the death and removal of the body of the fierce Chippewa, each had leisure to reflect on the but too probable issue of the struggle. As long as day remained to them, they felt that they could, while possessed of the gun and a sufficient quantity of ammunition, defend themselves; but when the darkness of night should come on, enabling their enemies to approach and surround them from all quarters, it must be vain to expect they could maintain the contest with the same success. That had hitherto attended their extraordinary efforts. Inactivity, in a position of that kind, ever brings despondency, and from one evil the mind is prone to revert to another. The married men thought of their wives and children and the horrible fate that awaited them, and from the men of strong nerve which they had manifested themselves to be while in positive action, they now were fast becoming timid, and irresolute, and anxious. The sight of the many dead and scalped bodies of their comrades around them was not much calculated to reassure them.

Meanwhile, Captain Headley had kept his glass almost constantly directed towards that part of the common adjoining the fort, where the great body of the Indians had now collected, and appeared to be in earnest deliberation. Among the number of those assembled he could distinctly make out Winnebeg, Waubensee, and Tee-pee-no-bee, the former of whom seemed to be addressing the younger Pottowatomies in energetic terms, while he frequently pointed to the blanket which contained the body of the slain Chip-

pawn. At length, when he had been succeeded by the two other chiefs just named, who seemed to deliver themselves in a similar spirit, a yell apparently of assent and approval came from the dark mass, and in a few minutes a party of about a hundred detached themselves from the group, and preceded by the same flag that had been raised by the immediate followers of Pee-to-tum, slowly advanced towards the little square.

"Courage, men," said Captain Headley, "we have not fought our steady battle for nothing; but let us give the credit of success where most it is due. We owe our preservation, if we are preserved, wholly to the gallantry of Ensign Ronayne. Had he not removed the spike from that gun, and fired it at the eventual sacrifice of his own life—nay more, had he not slain Pee-to-tum, our most bitter and relentless enemy—we should all have slept upon this field—that night we should never have seen;" and he pointed to the rude flag of which Winnebeg was the bearer, and which was then half way from the point of departure of the band.

"Even so," observed Lieutenant Elmsley—"to poor Ronayne, if this rag means anything pacific, and, from the fact of its being borne by Winnebeg, I have no doubt it does, must be ascribed our exemption from the fate of our unhappy comrades. Your ball was well aimed, Captain Headley, and hastened the death of the loathsome and vindictive savage; but never could he have survived that bayonet wound. Life must have ebbed away with the blood that followed its removal; yet," and this was said with a significance which his commanding officer seemed to understand, "it must be not a little satisfactory to you to know that your shot saved him from the tomahawk that was already raised to dispatch him."

"Would that in doing so I had saved his life," returned Captain Headley, seriously. "How doubly unfortunate is our position—without a surgeon to attend the wounded. Von Voltenberg I have not seen during the day—I greatly fear he has fallen also."

At this moment the Indians had come within about twenty paces of the square, one face of which Captain Headley had ordered to be opened to make a display of the gun behind which stood a man with a lighted match. Here they halted, looking with mixed regret, awe, and anxiety upon what they had so recently had in their own possession, while Winnebeg advanced a few paces to the front.

"What would the chief Winnebeg?" asked Captain Headley, with dignity. "He brings with him a flag. Are the Pottowatomies sick with blood?"

"The Pottowatomies are strong," returned the old warrior, in the figurative language of his race, "but they would not slay the brave. If the warriors of the white chief will lay down their arms and surrender themselves prisoners, their lives shall be spared."

"This is well to promise," rejoined the commanding officer; "but what reason have we to believe that the Pottowatomies are serious? They know that we will fight to the last, and they seek to save their own lives by fair words."

"On the faith of a chief, I pledge myself that their word shall be kept. Pee-to-tum is dead—he has no longer power over the young men, and they will now obey the voice of their own leaders."

"The word of Winnebeg is always good," replied Capt. Headley, "but I

distrust his young men; they received presents from their Great Father, and promised to escort his soldiers to Fort Wayne. How have they kept their word? Look around. More than half my soldiers lie there: but not alone. If the Pottowatomies count well, they will find more than two Indians for every white man."

"Our Father's warriors are brave," returned the chief, "and so the Pottowatomies would spare their blood. If they surrender their arms, I promise, in their name, that no more shall be split."

"I will consult my brave soldiers—they shall decide," observed the commandant, "not that I doubt your word or your good intentions, Winnebeg, but as you had not the power to restrain your young men at first, how am I to know that you can do so now? At present we have arms in our hands, and can defend ourselves; but if we yield them up, we may be tomahawked the next moment. However, as I said before, my brave followers shall decide."

"Mr. Elmsley," he added, turning coolly to his subaltern, "count up our little force, and ascertain how many men of the detachment remain."

"Two-and-twenty, sir," returned his subaltern, who had taken but a few minutes to enumerate them."

"Two-and-twenty out of sixty with whom we advanced to the charge this morning, besides two officers—one mortally wounded, the other missing. Well, this is rather hot work; but you see, Winnebeg, that if our loss has been more than forty, including the Miamis, the Pottowatomies killed are more than double in number."

Winnebeg replied not, but he looked imploringly at Captain Headley, as if desirous that he should accept the offered terms without irritating his people with allusions to their heavy loss.

"Well, men," continued that officer, who had remarked the particular expression of the countenance of the chief, "what is your decision? I am perfectly ready to act as you shall say, either to fight to the last, or to surrender, with the chance of being knocked on the head afterwards."

"Had we not better put it to vote, sir?" suggested Lieut. Elmsley; "the responsibility will then rest with the majority."

"A good idea, Mr. Elmsley. So be it. The majority of votes shall decide whether we fight or surrender."

The votes were accordingly taken, and the result was an equal division—eleven for surrendering and taking the chances of good faith—the other eleven, chiefly the unmarried men, for fighting to the last.

"The casting vote is with you, Mr. Elmsley; that given, we return our answer," remarked Captain Headley.

"Winnebeg," said the lieutenant, addressing him for the first time, "one question I would ask you first: know you anything of our wives—are they dead—and where is Mr. McKenzie?"

"They are all alive," returned the chief with animation—"bad wound, though—Winnebeg help save him himself."

Human nature could stand no more. Both officers, as if actuated by the same common impulse, met and embraced each other warmly. A mountain weight seemed to be taken from their oppressed hearts, and those two men, who had preserved the most cool and collected courage through the fearful, the appalling scenes of that day, stilling all their more selfish feelings, now

suffered the warm tears to gush in silence from their eyes. The men beheld this sight with an emotion little inferior to their own, and many a tear trickled over their faces and moistened and mixed with the dark deposit left by the bitten cartridge, as they too rejoiced in the safety of these brave and noble women.

"There can be no doubt what my decision in this matter will be now," remarked the lieutenant, when he had a little recovered from his emotion. "The good Winnebeg who has done thus much—saved those most dear to us—cannot want the power to save ourselves. My vote is for the surrender."

"Winnebeg," said Captain Headley, with great feeling, "whatever doubts may have existed in our minds as to the propriety of surrendering, they are now wholly removed. We know your worth and humanity, and commit ourselves wholly to your good faith. Indeed, from the moment I saw you coming at the head of this party, after the death of the black-hearted Peas-to-tum, I felt that we were safe from further attack. Still, it was my duty to consult the men who had so bravely fought with me. We consent to become your prisoners, on three conditions—first, that we be suffered to retain our colors, which you see there wrapped round the dying body of Mr. Romney, the friend of your son; secondly, that we be permitted to bury our dead comrades; and thirdly, that we be surrendered to the nearest British post at the earliest opportunity."

Winnebeg, after looking at the spot where the young officer lay, spoke for a few moments with his followers, who did not seem to relish the arrangement, for a good deal of animated conversation ensued between themselves; but at length the point was satisfactorily settled, and the former assented to the conditions of surrender Captain Headley had imposed. To have reposed any faith in the warriors themselves after what had occurred, that officer was now fully sensible would have been an act of madness; but he confidently hoped that, although Winnebeg and the other friendly chiefs might not have had the power to restrain the excitement of their young men in the first outburst of their rage for blood, their influence would to a certain extent be regained, now that the fiercest act in the drama had been played, and the chief actor was no more. The only thing that created uneasiness in him was the apprehension that the severity of their own loss might induce such a desire of vengeance in the minds of the warriors as to cause in them a renewal of their fury, and an utter disregard of the pledges of their leaders. Something however—indeed much—must be left to chance. As prisoners they might and would be saved, if the influence of their sager warriors and their own better feelings prevailed, while, as combatants, every man, without an exception, must have fallen. Moreover, the reason which had decided Lieutenant Elmsley in giving his vote had an equal influence in sustaining himself in the expediency of surrender. Their wives were prisoners, and a reunion with them was not impossible; whereas if they had resolved on defending their lives with the obstinacy of despair, that hope must have been for ever cut off, and the noble women—not to speak of the partners of their brave and humble followers—who had taken so prominent a share in the combat, wounded and sustained only by the faint possibility of a meeting with their husbands, would assuredly be made to undergo a similar fate.

And now commenced the most humiliating part of the movements of the day—the breaking up of the gallant little square, and the return, flanked by their Indian captors, of the remains of the detachment to the fort. In compliance with the wish of Captain Headley, expressed at the suggestion of his men, instead of taking the route selected by Winnebago in his advance, the party were suffered to return past the wagons. The scene which took place here was one of mingled consolation and despair. Such of the married men as had survived the conflict anxiously sought their wives, many of whom, with pale cheeks and sunken eyes, and hearts nearly crushed by the pitiless murder of their children, still wrung comfort in the midst of their despair, as they gazed once more on the features of those whom they had given up as lost for ever. But then, on the other hand, was the soul's misery complete of the poor women, widowed within the past few hours, who sought eagerly but in vain to distinguish the features of him who alone could console her under a similar bereavement, and who, with tears and sobs, sank back again into the wagon, in all the agony of increased and confirmed despair. It required stern hearts to behold all this unmoved; but the knowledge that their wives had been unharmed, whatever the savage destruction of their children, brought some little relief to the overcharged hearts of such of the married men as had been spared, and in their secret hearts they returned thanks to the Providence that had guarded not only their own lives, but the lives of those most dear to them.

CHAPTER XXV.

AND with what feelings did they now re-enter the fort, and what an aspect did it present! Half-drunken Indians were yet engaged in the work of plunder and destruction, insomuch so that it scarcely appeared to them the same place from which they had sallied out in the morning; and there were moments when the stoutest-hearted wished that they had never returned to it, but perished on the field where their comrades lay, unconscious of the past, regardless of the future of desolation, of which all they saw seemed to give promise. The officers' quarters, and the blockhouses, which had afforded them protection and shelter during many a long year, were now burst open, and every article of heavy bedding and furniture hurled into the square—the latter ripped open, and broken, and the feathers and fragments strewn around as if in mockery of the neatness that had ever been a distinctive characteristic of the well-swept parade ground, where heretofore a pin might have been picked up without a finger being soiled in the act. These were, seemingly, too minute considerations to have weighed at such a moment when higher and more important interests were at stake; but, to the well-regulated eye of the soldier, accustomed to order and decorum, they were now mountains of inequality and discomfort, which contributed as much to the annoyance and mortification of his position as the very fact of captivity itself; and if this was the feeling generally of the men, how deep must have been its effect on the officers, and particularly on Capt. Headley, who had ever been punctilious to a nicety in all that regarded the internal

arrangements of Fort Dearborn. But, offensive as this was, how much more so was it to behold many of the band fantastically arrayed, not only in their own clothing, but in that of their wives, desecrating, as it were, the terrible solemnity of the day, and mocking at the severity of suffering to which the latter had been subjected.

Of the Indians who had formed their escort, some stopped outside the gate, others mixed with the spectators, and only about a dozen followed them to the mess room, which Winnebago said he had selected for their temporary quarters, as being the least liable to interruption or molestation. He promised to send them food, and later in the evening, when all was quiet, to conduct the two officers to their wives, who, for greater quiet and security, were still lying concealed in the canoe where he had first placed them.

"Winnebago, Winnebago," said Capt. Hendley, solemnly, "how can we ever sufficiently repay you for your noble conduct to-day? Depend upon it, I shall not fail to make known to our Great Father that you have saved the lives of one third of the detachment; but let me remind you of the first part of our contract—the burial of the dead. There is plenty of daylight, and I wish to send out a dozen men for the purpose of digging one common grave for them all. Mr. Ronayne must, if not dead, be brought in on a litter: if, however, he is no more, no grave can be more honorable to him than that shared with his followers. You know, Corporal Collins, where the spades and picks are kept."

"Yes, sir, I know where they are usually kept, and where it is not likely they have been disturbed. What men, sir, am I to take?"

Almost every man in the detachment expressed his anxiety to be of the party; but the remainder of those who had been with the Virginian when he fell, and a few others, all unmarried men, were selected.

"Do you not think, sir," said Lieutenant Elmsley, "that I should command this party and superintend the arrangements? Poor Ronayne must be delicately handled."

"If you will do so, Mr. Elmsley, I shall be most glad; but not deeming it absolutely necessary, I did not propose it as a point of duty. But there is another thing to be considered: Winnebago, what escort will you give to my people? You know your young men are excited, and many may not know of the conditions of our surrender."

During this conversation, almost the whole of the Indians, to the number of eighteen or twenty, who have been alluded to as having plundered and offensively arrayed themselves in the dresses of the officers' wives, and who were evidently the most turbulent of the band, had been drawing gradually closer around the little party of prisoners. All were more or less ludicrously painted, and exhibited the most grotesque appearance.

When the remnant of the detachment first entered the fort, it was remarked that one of them—a mere youth—had closely, almost impudently, examined the features of the officers, and had followed, with most of his companions. When Captain Hendley made his request for an escort, this individual suddenly went up to Winnebago, tapped him on the shoulder, and said something, not in Pottowatomie but in Shawnee, accompanied by much gesticulation, which seemed to have great weight with the chief.

"Give him escort, dis," said the latter in reply, as he glanced his eye quickly upon the group, and with seeming intelligence.

"What! these men!" returned Captain Headley, with a shadow of remonstrance in his tone.

"Yes, all good Pottowatomie—all brave warrior—no give him dis," said he pointed to those who had accompanied them from the field, "all too much tired with fight already—dis men stay here all day. No fight."

Although by no means persuaded by the reasoning of Winnabag, but men who had been plundering and drinking what they could find during the whole of the morning, were the most proper persons to guard prisoners from the violence of excited enemies, Capt. Headley felt that it would be imprudent to urge any further opposition. For a single moment, it occurred to him that the chief had offered this escort with a hostile motive, but it was a thought which, involuntarily forced upon his mind, was as instantly discarded as unworthy of the chief, and, whatever might have been his latent misgivings, he no longer opposed an objection.

The preparations were soon made; the litter, and materials for digging found, and the little party, who had taken off their uniforms to avoid particular remark, and to be more free in their movements, sallied forth. On passing near the gate, and in a direction opposite to that by which they had just entered, they beheld the body of Doctor Von Voltenberg, within a few paces of the pathway by which they now advanced, which was the route taken by the Indians with the three-pounder. He was stripped to the skin, scalped, and with a profusion of large green flies and ants of the prairie settled on and seemingly disputing possession of the dark and coagulated blood that was already incrusting on the festering wound. The body was fast becoming bloated and discolored under the rays of an August sun, but no one could mistake the black and the peculiarly cut whisker, and the good natured and smiling expression of face which even in death had not wholly deserted him.

They had now reached the point where the Indians stood when the first grenades were thrown in among them by the followers of Ronayne. From this could be commanded a full view of the theatre of contest as far as the crest of the sandhill, being a full musket-shot from the spot where he had last fallen. The intermediate space, as has already been remarked, was thickly strewn with dead bodies amounting in all to upwards of a hundred, and the place chosen for interment by Lieutenant Elmsley was the small copse of underwood, from which the flank movement had been made upon Ronayne by the fresh band of Indians upon whom he had directed the fire of the three-pounder.

While occupied in digging a grave of about twenty feet square, their steady and tired looking escort amused themselves with examining the dead uniformed bodies that lay strowed thickly around, and it was remarked that they showed no such curiosity in regard to their own people who were indiscriminately mixed up with them. Gradually they approached the crest of the hill, and Lieutenant Elmsley, who was distrustful of their intentions, and kept a close eye upon their movements, saw the youth, already noticed, suddenly bound with uplifted tomahawk towards the spot where poor Ronayne was known to lie, and, after addressing a few words to his companions, stoop over his body, with what intention he could not make out, but he presumed to dispatch and to scalp him, for the cry uttered by the Virginian and heard even at that distance, was piteous to hear. Desiring the men to

ge on with their work, and collect the bodies as soon as it was complete; he hurried rapidly to the scene of this new action, and as he advanced saw another and a much stronger party of Indians approaching the same spot. Rapidly their escort closed in upon the officer over whom the young warrior was kneeling, and stooping down, drew from their victim another moan of inexpressible anguish. All then rose, and, grouped together, moved away parallel with the said ridge until they were finally lost behind a sudden elevation that continued the hill in an obtuse angle towards the forest.

Startled by the appearance of these fresh warriors, Lieut. Elmsley paused for a moment in his advance, but feeling that an appearance of mistrust might act unfavorably upon the band, he renewed his course, expecting at every moment to reach the mangled body of his friend. The Indians approached the same point at the same time, and he saw at once that the gang were composed of those who had accompanied Wamag when he came to offer terms to Captain Headley. Trusting, therefore, that there was no chance to be apprehended from those who were aware of the fact of the surrender, towards himself or party, he proceeded to search for his friend. To his surprise, his body was not to be seen. He could not be mistaken as to the spot where it had lain, close to Sergeant Nixon; but, though the latter was nearly in the same position in which he had fallen, the knife wounds had used upon the throat of the Chippewa, and the imprint of his body upon the sand, deeply moistened with the blood of both, was the only indication of Ronayne's having been there. It was evident that he had been carried off by the savage party who had formed their escort, and that the cries of agony uttered by him had been produced by the torture of moving his broken limb. What the motive for this new outrage could have been, it was difficult to conjecture, unless it was to secure at their leisure, and before the other party of Indians came up to dispute possession of the spoils with them—not only his scalp, but the blood-stained colors which he bore—perhaps to sell the latter as a trophy to the British.

Without condescending to bestow the slightest notice upon the officer, the Indians approached the bodies, and leisurely proceeded to strip them of their clothing. Their leader, uttering a yell of delight and surprise as he came near it, sprang upon the sergeant and secured the scalp, which Pectotum had failed to take. This piece of good fortune led the others to hope for something similar, and they accordingly dispersed themselves rapidly over the scene of combat, examining every head and stripping everybody. All this was done without Lieut. Elmsley having the slightest power to interfere, for he knew that any attempt at remonstrance would only be to provoke a similar fate, and thus the party passed on, stripping every soldier to the skin.

While he lingered hesitatingly near the spot whence his friend had been so singularly removed, waiting for the plunderers of the dead to depart before he should rejoin his men, his ears were suddenly assailed by a piercing shriek from the further extremity of the underwood in which the latter were digging, and which extended about two hundred yards on the left of the plain below. At once he knew the cry, and comprehended its cause; and rushing down the sandhill without thought of the new danger to which he might be exposed, turned the corner of the small wood, and stopping abruptly at a point where he could see without being noticed himself, beheld

a sight as distressing as, a few moments before, it had been unexpected.

With his uncovered head slightly raised, and reposing upon the projecting root of a tall tree that rose capriciously, yet majestically, amid the stunted growth around, lay the enfeebled and dying Ronayne extended upon a pile of clothing formed of the very dresses that had now been doffed for the purpose by his escort. By his side knelt his wife, disguised in the neat dress of one of Wau-nan-gee's sisters, and gazing into his pale face with a silent expression of agony which no language could render. But though his face was wan, and his eye gradually losing its lustre, the arm of the officer closely clasped around the waist of his wife, ever and anon strained her so passionately, so convulsively to his heart that a new fire seemed at these moments to be enkindled in both—and to prove all the intensity of the undiminished love he bore her. Neither spoke. Speech could not so well convey what was passing in their sad souls as could their looks, while the exhausted state of the wounded officer rendered exertion of any kind not merely painful but impossible. On the other side of the Virginian, who held his hand affectionately in his feeble grasp, stooped the young Indian already noticed, and standing grouped round, and gazing with evident sorrow on the scene, were his companions. The youth was Wau-nan-gee. His companions were his immediate and devoted friends—those who had sought to make the young officer a prisoner on a former occasion, when, had they succeeded, all this trial of the wife's agony might have been spared. On the first exit of the troops they had rushed into the fort on the pretence of plunder and excess, in the hope that their example would be imitated by many, and that thus the detachment might be left to pursue its route comparatively unharmed. And to a certain extent they succeeded, for many did follow them, and Pee-to-tum among the rest, whose absence in the first onset of the battle had dispirited the Indians, whom he had first excited, and given the Americans an advantage of which they never lost sight until the close. To have taken an active part in the defence, would have been not only impossible but impolitic, but in the course they had pursued they had no doubt saved such of the detachment as remained, for had all been engaged—had all borne a prominent share in the attack, the event, from the great disparity of numbers, could not have long been doubtful. When Wau-nan-gee, whose anxiety to know his fate had been great, first heard from his father of the wounded condition of Ronayne, he had proffered himself and friends as the escort of the detachment, intending to bear off the body, without being seen by the other Indians, to his mother's tent, where his wounds might be dressed and his life saved by the care and attention of his own wife.

All these particulars Lieut. Elmsley subsequently ascertained from Winnebago, for anxious as he was to take a last leave of his dying friend, and to express his joy at once again beholding, even under these disheartening circumstances, her for whom both himself and his wife had ever entertained the strongest friendship, the officer was afraid to move from the spot where, unseen himself, he had witnessed all, lest by suddenly exciting and agitating, he should abruptly destroy the life which was evidently fast drawing to a close. To have broken that solemn and silent communion of spirits, would, he felt, have been sacrilege, and he abstained; and yet, as if fascinated by the sight, he could not leave the spot—he could not abandon his dearest and

best friends without lingering to know how far his services might yet be available to both or one.

Apparently, Mrs. Ronayne had not uttered a sound since that piercing cry had escaped her which attested her first knowledge of the hopeless condition of her wounded husband. The attempt to carry him off the field, with the view not only of preventing him from being scalped, as he certainly would have been by the party then advancing, but of conveying him to the Indian camp of the women, had been productive of the greatest suffering; so much so that when he had gained the point where he now lay, and where his wife had first met him, he declared to Wau-nan-gee his utter inability to proceed further, and prevailed on him to place him on the ground that he might die in quiet.

It was now near sunset, and the condition of the Virginian was momentarily becoming weaker. He suddenly made an attempt to rally, and for a moment or two raised himself upon the elbow of the hand that still encircled the waist of his wife.

"Maria, my soul's adored!" he murmured, "I feel that I have not many moments left, and I should die in despair did I not know that there is one who will protect you while he has life. God knows what has been the fate of our poor companions, but even if living, they cannot shield you from danger. Wau-nan-gee," he said, turning faintly to the youth, "two things I am sure you will promise your friend—first, to conduct yourself in all things as my wife—your sister—desires; secondly, to conceal and guard these colors until you can deliver them up to the nearest American fort." Then, when the youth had solemnly promised, with tears filling his dark eyes, that he would faithfully execute the trust, he turned again to his wife, and said in a tone that marked increased exhaustion at the effort he had made, "Maria, sweet, it is hard to die thus—to leave you thus; but yet you will not be alone—Wau-nan-gee will love and protect you, obey your will: yet you need not now fear, I have avenged your wrong—that wrong of which the ruffian boasted when I slew him—tortured him—the monster." How different the gentle love of this affectionate boy! But I have not strength—oh, what sickly faintness comes over me! surely this must be —."

"Death!" he would have added, but silence had for ever sealed the lips that never more would speak his undying affection for his noble, graceful, and accomplished wife.

For some moments the unhappy woman continued to gaze upon the still features of her husband as though unconscious of the extent of her great misery, and when the reaction came, it was not expressed in shrieks or lamentations, or strong outward manifestations of emotion, but in the calm, serene, condensed silence of the sorrow that stultifies and annihilates. Her cheek was pale as marble, and there was a fixedness of the eye almost alarming to behold, as she rose erect from her bending position, and said, with severity, "This and more have your cursed people done, Wau-nan-gee! I shall ever hate to look upon an Indian face again! Ye that body must be buried deep in the ground, and in a spot known only to us both, where none may violate the dead. You have promised to obey me in all things. This is the first charge upon you. Let us go—the night is fast approaching, and the place remains to be reached, and the grave is to be dug. By to-mor-

row's dawn we travel together and alone through the wilderness, in execution of the will of your friend and my husband. Mark that, Wau-nan-gee? It is his will that we travel together—that you shall be my guide and protector. See this dress, how well it disguises me. I shall be taken, as we journey, for your squaw. Ha! ha! That will be excellent, will it not? Maria Heywood—Ronayne's wife—the mistress of a herd—then Wau-nan-gee's squaw—and not yet six weeks married to the first!"

She suddenly paused, put her hand to her brow—seemed to reflect, and then turning to Wau-nan-gee, inquired why he lingered so long and wherefore he did not replace the body in the litter and depart.

With a pensive and serious mien the youth, who had been still kneeling, absorbed in sorrow at the strange coldness of Mrs. Ronayne's manner, and afraid to disturb her in a distraction which he comprehended more from her looks and actions than her language, now rose, and saying something in a low tone to his companions, who had also regarded her throughout with silent surprise, the covering on which the body of the unfortunate officer reposed, was placed upon the blanket, which four of the party held extended, and at the direction of Wau-nan-gee the whole proceeded towards the forest.

When this strange and dispiriting scene had terminated, Lieut. Elmsley, who felt at each moment in a greater degree the uselessness of any interference in his powerless position, was rejoiced that at least the last moments of his friend had been comforted by the presence of his wife; he was led to hope that it had been the result of a momentarily-disordered brain, on which despair had now wreaked its worst, and which, therefore, might be expected to regain a stronger if not its wonted tone when the bitterness of grief should have somewhat subsided.

Proposing to prevail on Winnebago to obtain for him a meeting with her on the morrow, when the remains of her husband should have been consigned to their rude resting-place, he returned towards his party, whom he found in the act of covering up the bodies which they had, unmolested by the Indians, brought in from the different points where they had fallen. The grave was soon filled up—a short and mournful prayer read by the officer from memory, and the party returned full of gloom, and with hearts bowed down by sorrow, to the dismantled and desolate-looking fort.

CHAPTER XXV.

This act is an ancient tale twice told: King John.

THE wretchedness of that night who can tell! the despondency that filled the hearts of all, not so much in regard to the present as from apprehension for the future, who, untried in the same ordeal, can comprehend? but the feelings of the remnant of that little band, who were indebted for their safety to their own bravery, were not selfish. They lamented as deeply the fate of the fallen, as the dark and uncertain future that awaited themselves—uncertain because, although the chiefs had promised, and with sincerity, that

they should be given up as prisoners of war at the nearest post, they had seen too much of the falsehood of the race generally to rely implicitly on its fulfilment by the warriors. Alas! where were their comrades—friends, nay, brothers of yesterday? Where was the brave, the noble-hearted Wells—where the once gay, ever high-spirited Ronayne—where poor Von Voltenberg—the manly Sergeant Nixon, a Virginian also—the faithful Corporal Green—and nearly two thirds of the privates of the detachment? The very fact of being in the fort again, and everywhere surrounded by objects rendering more striking the contrast between the past and the present, was agony in itself. There was scarcely a man among them who would not have preferred bivouacking in the wild wood, amid storm and tempest, and the howling of beasts of prey, to resting that night within the polluted precincts of what had so recently been their safeguard and their pride.

Fortunately, the two surviving officers were, in some measure, exempt from these mortifications. True to his word, Winnebeg had caused Mrs. Headley and Mrs. Elmsley to be conveyed under cover of the darkness from their place of concealment to the mansion of Mr. McKenzie, which, from the great popularity of the trader with the whole of the Indian tribes, had been left untouched—he himself having been looked upon as a non-combatant, and, therefore, spared from all personal outrage.

The meeting between the husbands and their wives—both the former also slightly wounded during the day—was, as may be supposed, most affecting. Neither had ever expected, on parting in the morning, to behold each other; and now, although more or less injured, to find those who were preserved, as it were, by a miracle from a cruel death, with a prospect of future happiness, the past was for the moment forgotten, and gratitude to God for their preservation the dominant feeling of their souls. The examination of the wounds of the heroines was the next consideration. Most fortunate was it that of all the wounds received by the ladies—seven by Mrs. Headley and three by Mrs. Elmsley—not one was of a nature to disable or impede the motion of their lower limbs. A ball that had lodged in her arm, however, gave the former great pain; but, alas! there was no Von Voltenberg to cut it out. In this extremity, Winnebeg said he knew an Indian who was very expert at incision, and that he would procure his attendance.

Meanwhile the party were enabled to partake of some refreshments which had been ordered on the departure of Winnebeg for his charge; and exhausted as all had been by intense anxiety and emotion, from the moment of their setting out almost to the present, this was truly acceptable, especially to the two officers.

In the course of the repast, allusion was made to the gallantry and suffering of the unfortunate Ronayne, when, on Captain Headley asking, for the first time, what had been done with the body, Lieut. Elmsley proceeded to relate all that he had heard and witnessed a few hours previously.

This singular detail excited not only surprise but pain, especially in Mrs. Headley, whose deep friendship for, and interest in, both husband and wife had already been so strongly exhibited. It is not often that, in the hour of our keenest suffering, we have much sympathy to bestow upon others; but the noble woman had known the ill-fated Maria too intimately—known her too well—not to feel deep sorrow for the double affliction under which she labored. In the confession, if such it can be called, which she had com-

mitted to writing and subsequently transmitted by Wau-nan-gee, as well as in her wild and unconnected language on the day of the fatal occurrence itself, she had alluded to something terrible—an attempt at outrage, but in those vague terms of violated modesty which left the extent only to be surmised. No one of those who knew the contents of her communication, but suspected or presumed the worst, and had it not been for the avowal by Finayne of his vengeance for the avowed fulfilment of the hellish and sacrilegious lust of the hideous monster, and the strange admission that fell in her despair from Mrs. Romayne herself, the secret must have died with themselves.

It was not exactly a subject for discussion, under ordinary circumstances, and before every-day women; but here not only were the parties cognizant few in number, but actuated by nobler motives than those which would have governed more worldly and censoring people. Moreover, the nature of their connexion with each other, and with the victims themselves—for it was shown that Romayne had received his mortal wound from the rifle of the Chippewa—even the atrocity complained of, connected as it was with all the horrors of the past day, not only justified but compelled it.

"She must not be left where she is," gravely remarked Mrs. Headley, after some moments of reflection; "cannot Winnebeg, the good Winnebeg, whom, perhaps, we have taxed too much, be persuaded to bring her to us? Now that the worst has happened she will be far happier—more contented, by sharing our fortunes, whatever they may be, than remaining in the Indian encampment, cut off from every kindred association. What think you, Mrs. Elmsley?"

"Oh! I shall be too delighted to see, and to soothe her sorrow. As a sister, I have ever loved her—as a sister, I love her still."

"Then, assuredly," returned Mrs. Headley, "will she not hesitate to overcome her false delicacy, and to consider herself, what she really is, the victim of misfortune, and not of guilt, when a mother and a sister united look upon her as pure in thought as in the days of her unvedded innocence, and offer her what home may be preserved to themselves."

"Generously, nobly said!" remarked Lieutenant Elmsley, pressing the hand of his wife, and looking his feelings as he caught the eye of the last speaker. "I had intended to ask Winnebeg not to simply go himself, but to permit me to accompany him, that I might know her intention and offer her my aid. What I have now heard confirms me in my design. Early to-morrow morning, if he assents, we shall go over. But here he is himself, with the Indian who is to perform the operation on your arm, Mrs. Headley."

The door opened, and Winnebeg entered, followed by a tall, powerful, good-looking Pottowatomie, who glanced inquisitively around the apartment with the air of one who expects an unpleasant recognition, nor was it apparently without reason, for the moment Mrs. Elmsley beheld him, she uttered an involuntary shriek, and drew back with every manifestation of disgust. The Indian remarked it, and sought to retire, but Mrs. Elmsley, suddenly recollecting herself, and fearing so to offend him as to prevent the aid he had come to render, rose and held out her hand to him, saying, with an attempt at a smile,

"Never mind, —although we have fought a hard battle together

to-day, it is all over now. Let us be friends. Winnebeg, explain this to him."

Winnebeg did so, when, with a mingled look of astonishment and pleasure, the Pottowatomie warmly retained her pressure. It was the same warrior with whom she had grappled, in the desperation of a last hope, when so opportunely extricated from her perilous position by Black Partridge. As he had the reputation of much expertness in making incisions and removing balls lodged in the flesh, his attendance had been requested.

Calm and composed, although evidently laboring under deep dejection for the loss of her uncle, the horrible mode of whose death had, however, been kept back from her, Mrs. Headley, dressed in the light textured riding habit in which she had gone forth in the morning, and which, it has already been remarked, set off her finely moulded bust and waist to the best advantage, prepared to submit herself to the operation. As she raised herself up on the ottoman on which she reclined, Mrs. Elmsley cut open the sleeve to the shoulder, thus laying bare one of the most magnificent arms that ever was appended to a woman's body, the dazzling whiteness of whose contour was only dimmed in the fleshy part above, and in the immediate vicinity of the spot where the ball had entered.

At a sign from Captain Headley, the Indian, who had been talking aside with his chief, now approached, but no sooner did he behold the uncovered limb, when, either dazzled by its brilliancy, which to him must have seemed in a great degree superhuman, or shocked that anything so beautiful should have been thus wounded, he suddenly stopped, and while his eyes were as if fascinated, the blood could be seen suddenly to recede from his dark cheek.

"No, father," he said to Winnebeg, "I cannot do it. I cannot cut that arm open—the very thought makes me sick here!"—and he pointed to his heart. "I cannot do it."

Although this involuntary homage to the rich, full, and moulded beauty of a limb which was but a sample of the perfection of the whole person, and which in a woman seldom attains its fullest harmony of proportion before the mature age which Mrs. Headley had attained, was not exactly that of the porter who, at an earlier period, solicited the famous Duchess of Gordon to permit him to light his pipe at her ladyship's brilliant eyes, it was certainly conceived in much of a similar spirit, and Mrs. Headley could scarcely herself suppress a smile when she remarked the effect upon the Indian.

And yet this man had been one of the foremost in the attack, and at his waist, even then, dangled more scalps than had been taken by any other warrior during the day.

"Well," said Mrs. Headley, on the Pottowatomie continuing resolute in his refusal to touch the wound— "somebody must do this act of charity, for the ball gives me much pain. Mr. McKenzie," she added, with that sort of smile that may be attributed to a person seeking to assume an air of unconcern even when most disheartened—"you have long been accustomed to use the dissecting knife on the buffalo and the bear: do you not think that you could find the courage necessary for the occasion?"

"Most decidedly: I will make the attempt if you desire it," returned the trader; "but I fear that my surgical apparatus is very limited indeed. Von Voltenberg having been stripped, all his instruments have, doubtless, been

plundered, so it is no use to look for aid there; and the only thing with which I can try my skill is a common but very sharp penknife."

"Try whatever you please," said Mrs. Headley; "only relieve me of this suffering; that which you may inflict cannot possibly be worse"—and unflinchingly extending her arm, she waited for him to begin.

For the first time in his life Mr. McKenzie felt nervous. There was a greater amount of courage required to cut into the delicate flesh of a woman than even to kill a bear or a buffalo; but as he had promised, he summoned up his resolution and skill to the task.

The Pottowatomie, bedizened with scalps as he was, had remained to witness the cutting out of the ball; and nothing could surpass the expression of surprise that pervaded his features, as he keenly watched the almost immovability of Mrs. Headley from the moment that the blade of the penknife, dexterously enough handled, entered into the flesh and effected the incision necessary to enable the ball to be removed. When the operation was finished, and the ball produced, he started suddenly to his feet, and uttered a sharp exclamation, denoting approbation of her wonderful courage. He asked, as a favor, to retain the ball as a testimony of her heroism; when Mrs. Headley presented it to him with her own hand. And with this he departed, exulting as though he had taken a new scalp.

This incident, perhaps unimportant in itself, was not without some moment in the results to which it led. On the day following the fort was filled with Indians and their squaws not only endeavoring to assert their claims to individual prisoners, but infuriated at the losses, seeking a victim to the names of their deceased relatives. Among others was an aged squaw, who had lost a favorite son in the battle, and who, having been told by a warrior that he had distinctly seen him killed by a shot from Mrs. Headley's rifle, repaired to the house of Mr. McKenzie, where she knew she then was, bent upon exciting the general sympathy of the warriors in her favor, and obtaining their assent that she should revenge his death upon the "white squaw."

It happened, however, that the noble woman, feeling great relief from the abstraction of the ball from her left arm the preceding evening, and feeling secure in the pledge entered into by Winnebago, and confirmed in a measure by his people, had fearlessly mounted her horse, which had been recovered for her, and ridden alone to the baggage wagons for the purpose of procuring some article which, at the moment, she much required. As she was returning, and when near the entrance to the fort, she was met by the vixen, furious with rage and disappointment at not having found her.

Advancing with a cry that might be likened to that of a fiend, she seized the bridle of the horse, and attempted to drag his rider by her habit to the ground—shrieking forth at the same time her determination to have her life who had taken the life of her son. But Mrs. Headley was not one, as the reader of this by no means fictitious narrative already knows, to be thus intimidated. She possessed too much of the high spirit, the resolute nature of her unfortunate uncle to submit quietly to the outrage, and, moreover, she knew enough of the Indian character to be sensible that it was not by any manifestation of submission that she could hope to escape the threatened danger. Her course was at once taken. She struck the gaunt and shrivelled hag such a violent stroke over her shoulder with the horsewhip

of cowhide she held, that the latter was compelled to release her hold; and, as she rushed into the fort, calling on the Indians to revenge her son and kill the white squaw, the latter followed her completely round the square, using her cowhide with a dexterity and an effect, as she leaned over her saddle, that drew bursts of laughter and approval from the warriors eagerly gazing on the scene. At one moment, there was a manifestation of a desire to carry out the wishes of the crowd and kill Mrs. Headley, and several voices were loud in the expression, but suddenly then stood forth the Pottowatomic of the preceding evening, the antagonist of Mrs. Elmsley, who, from his commanding appearance, at less than by the prestige of his bravery imparted by the numerous fresh scalps at his side, soon made himself an object of attention. None of the chiefs were present.

"The white squaw shall not be killed," he pronounced, as he held up his tomahawk authoritatively; "she is brave like a Pottowatomic warrior. See here," holding up first five and then two fingers—"so many bulls have hit her, and yet she is here, on horseback, as if nothing had happened. What Indian would have courage to do that? Speak!"

"Pwau-na-shig lies," returned the beldame, whom Mrs. Headley had now ceased to punish, yet who, panting from the speed she had used in her flight, was almost inarticulate, thereby provoking the greater mass of the Indians knowing its cause to increased mirth—"the white squaw has no wounds—where are they—she cannot show them. If she had wounds she could not sit on her horse; but she has killed my son, and I demand her blood. Let her be given up to my tomahawk."

A loud and confused murmur burst from many of the group, influenced by the words of the last speaker. Mrs. Headley sat her horse with indifference, patting his head gently with the whip, yet looking earnestly towards Pwau-na-shig, upon whom she now altogether relied.

"The mother of Tuh-quu-quod is a foolish old woman, and knows not what she says," vociferated the tall warrior; "do you doubt the word of Pwau-na-shig—see here," and he took from his pouch and held up to view between his finger and thumb the bullet which had been extracted the preceding evening. "That," he said, "I saw taken from her flesh with my own eyes—she did not move—she made no sign of pain—she was like a warrior's wife; but you shall see what Pwau-na-shig says is true."

He approached Mrs. Headley, who, comprehending his object, shifted her rein to the whip hand, and calmly extended her left arm. Where it had been cut open, the sleeve of her riding habit was fastened from the wrist to the shoulder by narrow dark ribbons, which had been sewn on the previous evening by Mrs. Elmsley, and these the Pottowatomic proceeded to untie; then turned back the sleeve, as well as the snow-white linen of the upper arm, soiled only with her own blood, until the whole was revealed.

Apparently as much struck by the brilliancy and symmetry of the limb as Pwau-na-shig himself had been, the warriors—even those who had been most clamorous in support of the demand of the old squaw—were now unanimous in their low expressions of admiration: nor was this sentiment at all lessened when, following from the wrist the rich contour of the swelling arm, it finally rested upon the wound she herself had divested of its slight drape. The incision made by the penknife of Mr. McKenzie, at least three inches in length, had assumed a slight character of inflammation, and con-

trusting as it did with the astounding whiteness of every other portion of the limb, gave it the appearance of being much more severe than it really was. But it was not the wound alone that enlisted the feelings of the Indians in favor of Mrs. Headley. Connected with that was the coolness she had evinced throughout the whole affair from the persevering flagging of the haridan, who sought her scalp, to the graceful unconcern with which she sat her horse when she must have known that it was then a question under discussion whether her life should be taken or not. This, with the fact of the wound which they then saw, and their no longer doubt of the existence of many others, were undeniable evidences of her heroism, and at that moment Mrs. Headley was regarded by these wild people with a higher respect than she had ever commanded in the palmiest days, of her husband's influence with the race.

"No kill him," said Pwau-na-shig, exultingly, as he remarked the effect produced on his companions—"white chief's wife good warrior."

"No, no kill him," answered another voice, in broken English also. "Dam fine squaw—wish had him wife—get brave papoose."

A general expression of assent came from the band, when Mrs. Headley, whose sleeve had again been rudely tied by Pwau-na-shig, fearing that if she remained longer another reaction might take place, pressed the hand of the Indian with a warmth of gratitude that brought the strong fire into his eye and the warm blood into his cheek, turned her horse's head, and cantered out of the fort, followed by the wild ravings of the beldam, who tore her long and matted grey hair and stamped her feet in fury at the disappointment. In a few minutes she was again at the door of Mr. McKenzie, and alighted in the arms of her husband, who, alarmed at her long absence, was in the act of leaving the house in search of her when she arrived.

"There come Elmsley and Winnebeg, but unaccompanied," remarked Captain Headley, when, in reply to his inquiry as to the cause of her long absence, she said she would tell him later. "I fear that they have been unable to prevail upon Maria to leave the new home of her election."

"I am sorry for it," gravely returned his wife. "I must say her choice is not exactly what I should have expected; but here they are—we shall soon know. Well, Mr. Elmsley," she added, as that officer ascended the veranda, followed by Winnebeg, "what news do you bring of the truant?"

"I scarcely know whether to consider it good or bad," returned the lieutenant, with an air of disappointment; "but I have not seen Mrs. Rouayne. There seems to have been more method than madness in her language to Wau-nan-gee of yesterday, for this morning she departed with him to Detroit."

"Indeed," remarked Mrs. Headley; "you surprise me, Mr. Elmsley; but does she perform that long journey on foot?"

"No; Winnebeg ascertained from his wife that she was mounted on her own horse, and that Wau-nan-gee, having visited and returned from Hard-scabble during the night with a couple of trunks, she had made up two large packages, which were tied to the back of her saddle, while the youth strapped two others similarly prepared with provisions, behind his own pony. Taus provided, and Wau-nan-gee with his rifle on his shoulder and otherwise well armed, they set out at daybreak.

"Poor Maria! what your eventful destiny will be, heaven only knows," sighed Mrs. Headley; "for not only the road but the course you pursue is one beset with danger. But our lots are now cast in different channels, and we have need of attention to ourselves. Come in, Winnebeg, while I relate to you the somewhat narrow escape I have again had from the tomahawk since you left this morning."

"Good God! what do you mean?" simultaneously exclaimed the two officers. Winnebeg stared and looked as if he did not fully comprehend.

"Oh! quite an adventure, I can assure you; and who do you think was my devoted knight-errant?"

"What a subject to jest about, Ellen!" remarked her husband, half reprovingly. "To whom do you allude?"

"Only the tall warrior who tried so desperately to get your wife's scalp, Mr. Elmsley."

"What, Pwau-na shig?"

"The same. You cannot imagine what a conquest I have made; but let us go in—the story is too good not to be told to all, and I presume both Mrs. Elmsley and her father are in."

"They are," said Captain Headley, as the lieutenant gave his arm to conduct her into the house.

Little remains to be added to our tale. Of the incidents that occurred to Wau-nan-gee and his charge, after their departure from the camp of the Pottowatomies, we might, and may, speak hereafter; but, as it is not essential to our present design, and would necessarily occupy far more space than is consistent with the limits we have been compelled to prescribe to ourselves for the detail of the attack and partial massacre of the garrison of Fort Dearborn, we forbear. We had always intended the facts connected with the historical events of that period to be divided into a series of three, like the *Guardsmen*, *Mousquetaires*, and *Twenty Years After*, of Dumas. Two of these, embracing different epochs and circumstances, we have completed in "*Hard-scrabble*" and "*Wau-nan-gee*;" and whether the third, on a different topic than that of war, and which, as we have just observed, is not necessary to the others, ever finds embodiment in the glowing language and thought of Nature, nursed and strengthened in Nature's solitude, will much depend on the interest with which its predecessors shall have been received. Yet, whether we do so or not, we trust the sweet, the gentle Maria Ronayne—the loadstone of attraction to all who knew her, will have excited sufficient interest in those of her own sex who have followed her in her hitherto chequered fate to induce in them a desire to know more of the destiny to which she seemed to have been born.

Of the other characters, scarcely less interesting, we can speak with greater confidence. On the third day after the battle, the prisoners, including Mr. McKenzie and the members of his household, were removed from Chicago, and scattered about in small and separate parties, at various intervals of distance from Mackinaw, then in possession of the British. Here Mrs. Headley remained some time, in order that she might recover sufficiently from her troublesome wounds, when Winnebeg, in whose immediate charge she and her husband were, learning that his people manifested impa-

tience at the indulgence shown to them, and with their usual fickleness and inconsistency, desired to have them given up to their own custody, paddled them, aided only by his squaw, from their village, a distance of three hundred miles along the shores of Lake Michigan to the post of Mackinaw, whence the prisoners, who had been received with all the courtesy the knowledge of their position and the fame of their deeds could not fail to inspire, by the gentlemanly commander of that post, were subsequently transferred to the general then commanding at Detroit.

And great was the curiosity of the young British officers then in garrison at the latter post, to behold this noble and accomplished woman, the reputation of whose coolness and courage, under the most trying circumstances, had been widely circulated by her friend, Mrs. Elmsley, who, with her father and husband, had some weeks preceded her to the same quarter.

Little did we at the time, as we shared in the general and sincere homage to her magnificence of person and brilliancy of character, dream that a day would arrive when we should be the chronicler of Mrs. Headley's glory, or have the pleasing task imposed upon us of re-embodiment, after death, the inevitable grace and fulness of contour that then fired the glowing heart of the unformed boy of fifteen for the ripened and heroic, although by no means bold or masculine woman of forty.

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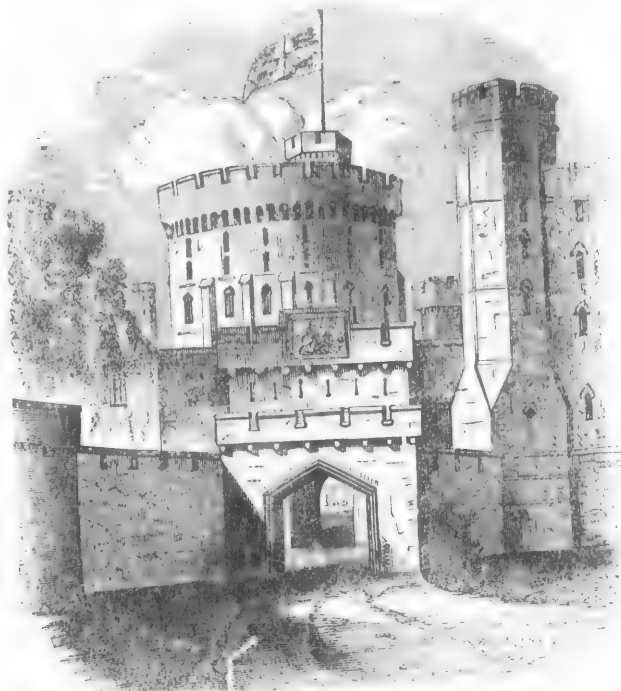
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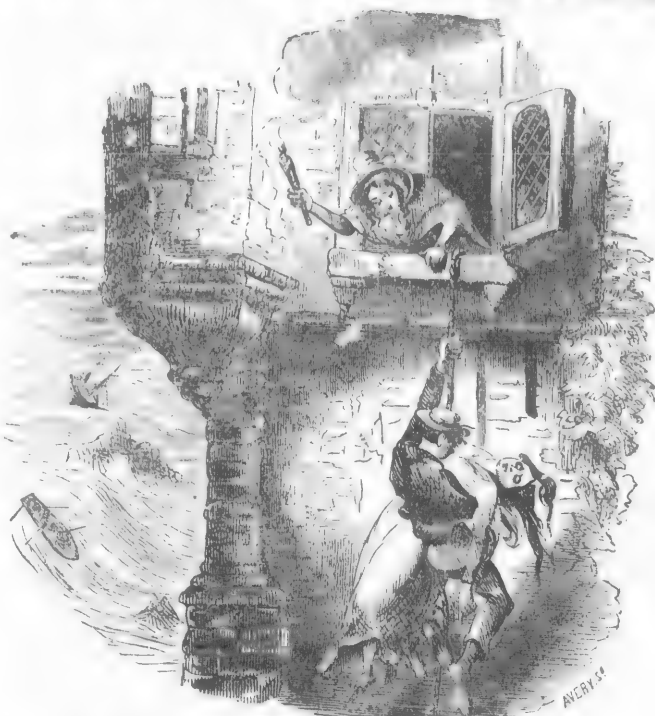
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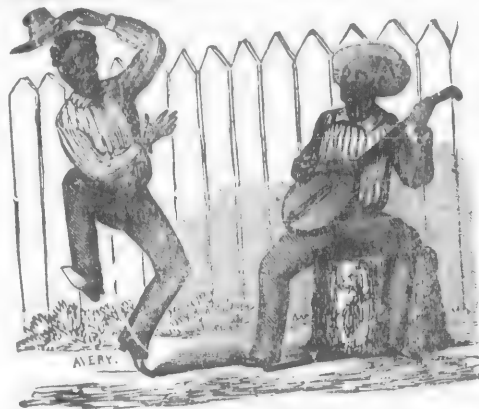
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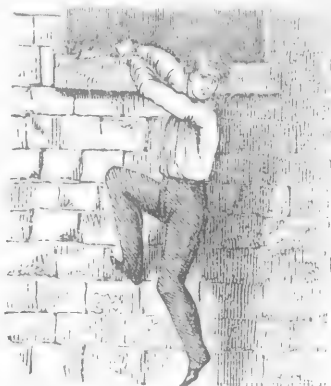
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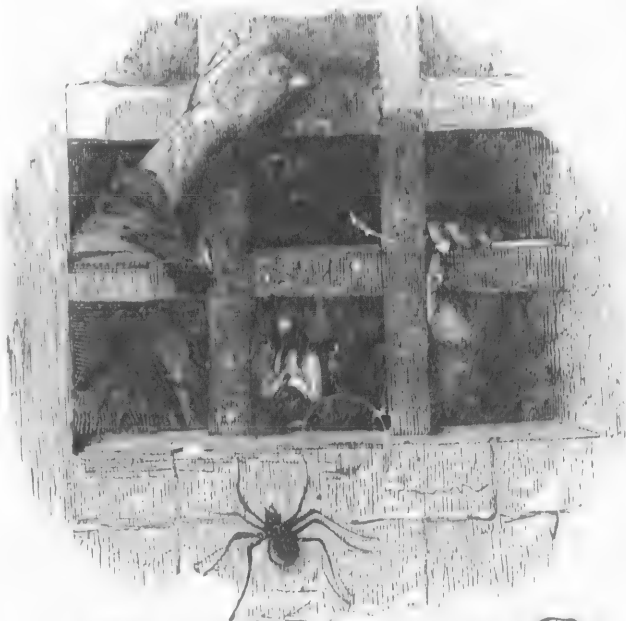
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